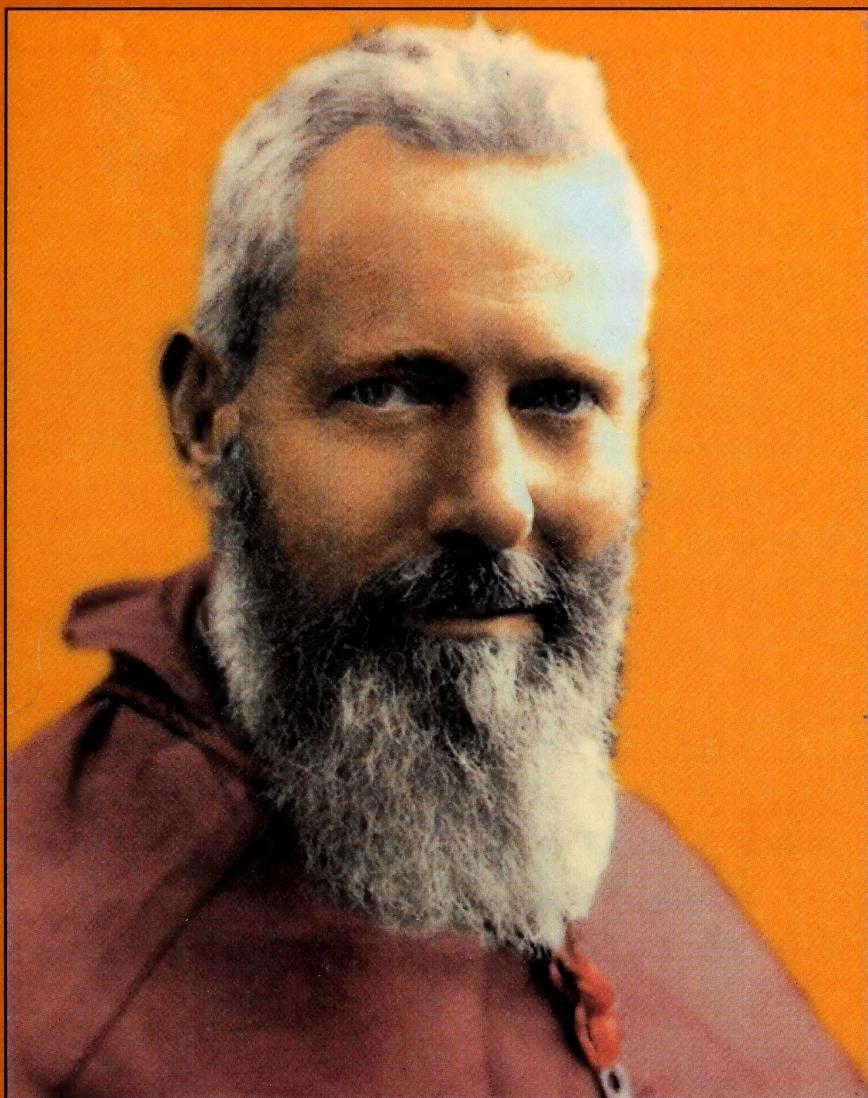


Bishop Joseph Shanahan CSSp
Selected Studies



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Seán P. Farragher CSSp

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*Congregation of the Holy Spirit
USA Eastern Province*

IRISH SPIRITAN STUDIES No 1

Bishop Joseph Shanahan

Selected studies

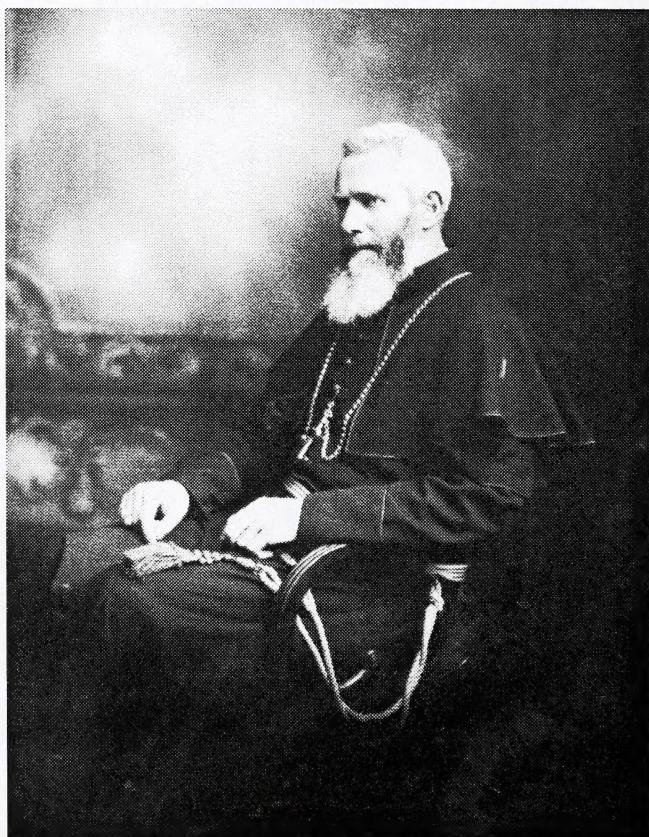
by

Seán P. Farragher CSSp



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Principal Dates

1871 Born 4 June in Glankeen, Borrisoleigh, Co. Tipperary
1886 Went to France to study for the priesthood
1897 Returned to Rockwell as 'Prefect' or Junior Master – an outstanding rugby player in Munster club competitions
1900 22 April - Ordained priest at Blackrock College; Served as Dean of the boarding school in Rockwell
1902 Left Ireland for Nigeria 9 October
1905 Appointed Prefect Apostolic, Southern Nigeria
1907 Opened the first permanent mission in the interior of the country at Ozubulu
1913 Launched the first Teacher Training Centre at Igbariam
1920 Ordained Bishop 6 June at Maynooth College
1924 7 March Founded the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary
1932 Retired to Blackrock College from where he continued to work actively in promoting the foreign missions
1938 Went to serve in Kenya
1943 Christmas Day Bishop Shanahan died in Nairobi
1956 Bishop Shanahan's remains were transferred to Nigeria
1997 Always revered as a saint, Bishop Shanahan's cause for Beatification was officially launched at Onitsha, Nigeria, 15 November 1997

Foreword

Ever since I saw and heard Bishop Shanahan speaking at Rockwell College when I was a student there I felt captivated by him. Over the years I endeavoured to discover and collate all the significant material that might reveal the man as he was while in the making as a student and at some later periods of his life for which I had access to documentation. I was fortunate, while occupied with research on other matters in France, to be put in contact with school documents and Shanahan's own letters as a student in France. This enabled me to piece together the eleven years he spent 'in exile' there. The spiritual journal he kept in 1897 revealed the extraordinary personal struggle as he tried to reshape his approach to God and to his vocation. The succeeding five years spent in Rockwell as junior master and later as professor and Dean were not as well documented but from the history of Rockwell at the time it was possible to construct a satisfactory framework of his life there. From journals in the Irish Spiritan communities and from his own letters it was possible to trace his activities while at home in Ireland, especially when recovering from serious illness in 1919 and in the months leading up to his being ordained Bishop in Maynooth College on 6 June 1920. For the years spent in active retirement at Blackrock College, 1932-1938, I was fortunate to be in contact with people who had known him well at that time and his own remarkable letters gave an insight to his inner feelings. Realising that it is the family milieu which is the real shaper of character I set about, rather late, to garner all that was available about that stage of his life.

I had no intention of doing any study in depth of Bishop Shanahan's main life work in Nigeria as I felt that, though there was a rich store of documents available in the Spiritan general archives about that matter, my lack of experience of Nigeria would be a serious handicap in doing justice to these. There was no question at the time of publishing my findings as they were mostly an attempt to put in chronological sequence the flow of Bishop Shanahan's life and thoughts. But after the introduction of Bishop Shanahan's cause for beatification in November 1997 and as the approach of the centenary of his departure for Nigeria on 9 October 1902 approached I decided it was imperative that I attempt to document his first steps as a missionary in Nigeria and try to pinpoint what made people opt for him as head of the mission after but a short three years of work that had little spectacular to show.

As these separate essays were done as independent studies of selected periods of Shanahan's life there is a certain amount of overlap. And as all those matters to do with a great personality take on a special significance, much that might otherwise seem trivial has been retained from these ongoing studies. It is hoped that a more full picture of the human development of this great missionary Bishop may thus emerge from this cumulative approach, and above all that we may have a close view of a saint in the making.

Seán Farragher CSSp
Blackrock College
9 October 2002

Acknowledgements

I am conscious that I am deeply indebted to many people over the years since I first embarked on these special studies – several of whom have been since called by the Lord. To single out some among those still happily with us may well be invidious. I trust that their common wish is that through their efforts Bishop Shanahan may be better known and loved and that one day he may - God willing - be numbered among the official saints of Christ's church.

Two names, however, that must be mentioned are Sister Angela Ruddy of the Missionary Society of the Holy Rosary, which was founded by Bishop Shanahan, for her generous supply of copious and well-researched information, and Caroline Mullan, Blackrock College archivist, for her patient and painstaking proof reading and preparation of the text.

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Growing up in Tipperary 1871-1886

Growing up in Tipperary 1871-1886

Born in Currafrusha, Glankeen, Borrisoleigh, Co. Tipperary, 4 June 1871, Joseph Shanahan was baptised by Fr P J Morris on 7 June in Borrisoleigh parish church. The only godparent mentioned for Joseph's baptism is Bridget Ryan, who may also have served as the midwife.

Glankeen had been the religious centre in the area in centuries past. St Cúilán founded a monastery there in the seventh century and for centuries afterwards it had been a noted centre of religion and learning. Though the parish cemetery is still located there, the place of worship was moved to the local town, Borrisoleigh. During the penal days any Catholic churches which were tolerated had to be sited away from the more public places. A side street, known since as Chapel Street, was chosen for the mass house or chapel. The last chapel in this side street was built in 1805 and it was there that Joseph Shanahan was baptised. This church is now in ruins, part of it being incorporated into a factory building. The sacristy, still standing free but unroofed, is part of a private property.

Joseph's parents were Daniel and Margaret (Maggie) Walsh. Margaret was a native of Glenmore in the neighbouring parish of Templederry. Daniel's family were also natives of Templederry parish, residing possibly beside the National School at Gortnagoona where the grandfather, Mike Shanahan, is said to have once owned some thirty acres. It is thought that he lost the ownership of this farm and that he went to work in the local silver mines. What is certain is that Mike's nephews, sons of Con, got possession of these thirty acres later from the local landlord, namely John Dwyer O'Ryan's father. That branch of the Shanahan family - two brothers John and Jeremiah, and two sisters, one named Johanna - lived there until the 1930s. None of them married. John died young of appendicitis. It was recalled that these Shanahans used to come on a visit to the Bishop's family home every year on St Stephen's day. The last of that family sold the farm in 1937. There was at least one other Shanahan family living in that area.¹

Daniel and Margaret were married in Templederry on 17 June 1864 in the old parish church built in 1813 and also situated on a minor road. Fr John Kenyon P.P. officiated at the ceremony. The witnesses were John Shanahan and Mary Walsh, presumably family members. Their first child Mary was born in 1865 and when her father Daniel registered the birth he gave his address as Gortnagoona. It was the custom in many parts of the country that when a male member of the family married he set up in an outhouse attached to the home until he acquired a place of his own. One tradition has it that Daniel Shanahan and his wife lived for a period in Glenmore - Margaret's home town land - but there is no proof of this.

Some time after Mary's birth the family moved to Glankeen in the neighbouring parish of Borrisoleigh about five miles away where they were provided with a little house situated about half a mile from the town. It is not known why they moved to that area. One tradition is that they had been evicted because they were unable to pay the rent. Another tradition is that as Daniel was a herd or steward on an outfarm owned by John Dwyer O'Ryan in the Glankeen area that he was provided with a small dwelling house there. It is known that at that time there were several Shanahan families in Borrisoleigh. One of these families in the Glankeen area had the

same Christian names as Daniel's family.² Therefore it is possible that when they moved to that area originally they did so because of family connections.

The next three Shanahan children were born in Glankeen: Michael in 1866, John in 1869 and Joseph - the subject of this study - in 1871. Nothing is known about life in the Shanahan home at this early period, but it would be an understatement to say that life could not have been easy for the family in those years.

Some two or three years after Joseph's birth his father was offered the job as herdsman by John Dwyer O'Ryan near his own residence in Cloghonan, Templederry. This O'Ryan family is said to have been the landlord from whom the Shanahan's previously had the lease of the farm at Gortnagoona. What is certain is that John D O'Ryan now provided Daniel and his family with a new home in Gortnalaura about half a mile from his own spacious dwelling in Cloghonan. That O'Ryan house across the road from the present Templederry church and school is still extant and though the family in possession are again Ryans they are not related to the former owner.

No trace now remains of the house where the Shanahan family lived in Glankeen and where Joseph was born. A little monument in the form of a masonry doorway marks the spot. It was erected by the parish priest of Borrisoleigh, 1950-1975, Francis Canon Davin. Recently a concrete seat has been added to provide a resting place for people who wish to pray and meditate at the spot. A local family has cared for the shrine over the years.

Templederry is situated in Upper Ormond, six miles south east of Nenagh. The parish is in the diocese of Killaloe, bordering on the diocese of Cashel. It is traversed by a portion of the Keeper Hill Range. The Vale of Templederry is a fertile spot, nicely situated among the hills and the land is chiefly in pasture as the hilly terrain was found difficult to cultivate. The parish is officially known as Killanave (Cill na Naomh - the church of the Saints) Templederry, and it is today served by two churches, the main one being at Templederry and the other at Killeen.

The change from Glankeen to Templederry must have meant much for the comfort of the growing family as there was henceforth a fixed job and a guaranteed income, little as it may have been by today's standards - reportedly a shilling a day. But there would have been several perks. The house was free of rent and they were allocated a plot of ground for growing vegetables, keeping some fowl, perhaps later a cow for milk and butter and a pig to provide meat. In the absence of a cow in the beginning they would have been helped out from the O'Ryan farmyard. John O'Ryan, who owned three farms in the locality, had no family of his own, and he is known to have been very generous in his help to the Shanahans. He greatly appreciated the service and dedication of Daniel whom he may have known well earlier as there is a tradition that Daniel had already served in his employment, and, as already related, John O'Ryan's father may have been the landlord from whom the Shanahans had the lease of their farm in Gortnagoona. John seems to have treated the Shanahan children as his own over the years. He got to know them very well, especially when the mother helped in housekeeping for him and in milking the cows. Apart from whatever financial reward she received for her work, milking the cows etc., she was recalled as once carrying home on her back a sizeable sack of corn meal.

The basic food in the Shanahan household would have been potatoes, milk and porridge until they were in a position to rear a pig for killing. The flitches of bacon when salted and smoked as they hung in the kitchen would last a long time. They may also have had a donkey and cart for travelling from time to time to the

nearest town Borrisoleigh, or perhaps farther afield to Nenagh or even Thurles on occasion.

The family were to inhabit that herd's house for over twenty years. It was a two-storey slated house about thirty feet long with two rooms on the ground floor and two overhead which served as the bedrooms for the boys and girls. Only a portion of the dwelling-house remains today - one wall overgrown with ivy serves as part of an outhouse. The gable end of the stable still stands close by.

The name of the locality - Gortnala(u)ra – is said to mean the ‘Field of the ancient ruins’ – presuming that it read in Irish *Gort na Láithreach* - ‘láithreach’ meaning, among other things, ruins or even a sanctuary. Beside the herd's house on the slope of the hill is a field ringed by rather ancient trees and it is possible that the Irish name was *Gort na lára* – ‘the mare’s field’, that is a special paddock reserved for a mare when in foal, just as the area where the local schoolhouse was built was named Gortnagoona, that is *Gort na gamhna*, the calves’ field. Although there was a profusion of Irish names in the area there is no tradition that the Irish language had survived into the 1870s as it had in other parts of Tipperary.

The Shanahan children born in Gortnalaura are as follows: Richard born 1873; Louis Patrick born 1875; Jeremiah (given as Jer on his birth certificate and later known as Gerald) 1877; Bridget born 1880; Margaret born 1882, and, finally, Daniel born 1885, the year before Joseph left for France.

Their mother's brother, Patrick Walsh, may have been living with the Shanahan family by 1875. At least that was the forwarding address he gave at the time. He was a farm labourer, possibly also in the employment of John Dwyer O’Ryan and, though as his home address he gave his sister's residence, he could well have been availing of accommodation where he had been working until then. At the age of 22 he applied for admission to the Juniorate at The French College, as Blackrock College was then known. Most likely this decision was prompted by the fresh efforts being made by the President of the College, Père Jules Leman, to secure vocations for service on the foreign missions, particularly in Africa. One of the students from the neighbouring parish, Joseph Gleeson of Garryard, Silvermines, who was in the Juniorate at the time, was allowed to go home on holidays to make inquiries among the clergy and in the local schools to see if there were any suitable candidates for the Congregation. The parish priest of Templederry then, 1865-85, was Fr Michael Gleeson, and we find the name Matthew Gleeson listed as a teacher in the local school for a period. As Gleeson was a common name in the Templederry area, Joseph may have had relatives among them. The fact that Patrick Walsh, then aged 22 years and more accustomed to the spade than the pen, applied for acceptance for the priesthood is significant. One can presume from this that he had a fair level of education, that he was academically inclined and was well known to the parish priest, Fr Michael Gleeson, and to a local schoolteacher.

Patrick Walsh entered the Juniorate at Blackrock College on 20 September 1875. This back- to-school challenge, however, trying to master Latin and French etc., must have been seen by the Director, Fr Joseph Spielmann, to have proved too much for him. However as he was seen to have a solid vocation he was advised to opt instead for being a Brother in the Congregation. That November he transferred to Rockwell College near Cashel in Co. Tipperary, where the Brothers' novitiate was then located. As Brothers were required to take a new name by which they were henceforth to be known, Patrick took or was given the rather unusual name Adelm after the French saint *Adelme* - a lesser-known Benedictine abbot who lived ca 1100 and whose feast is kept locally in France on 30 January.

At the time Patrick left for Blackrock and soon after for Rockwell, his nephew Joseph was aged four years and four months. It is unlikely that he saw him again for several years as in those times Rockwell was not easily accessible from Templederry in the absence of direct public transport. Visits to one's home by members of this French Congregation were very rare and allowed only for exceptional reasons. Br Adelm made his profession as a Brother in 1878, and after a further year's apprenticeship he was appointed to Blackrock. He may well have called around that time to Templederry to make arrangements for his nephew Michael, then aged thirteen, to accompany him to Blackrock to join the Juniorate. What is certain is that Adelm always took an active interest in the family and was ever ready to promote their interests. His name is given in the Blackrock students' account book in connection with his nephew's account.

By 1879 Joseph was over eight years of age and had been attending the nearby school at Clohinch. Later in life, when he listed the people who had made a significant contribution to his welfare, he singled out his parents, the local priest and his teacher. From the fact that 'teacher' is given in the singular one might assume that there was only one teacher in that school and that he had had the same teacher all through. That does not fit the facts as known. The National School at Clohinch was opened in 1862. Prior to this there had been another National School already in existence in the parish since 1845, and though the stone plaque still extant reads 'Templederry National School' it was located about a mile and a half from Templederry in a rather remote area named Gortnagoona near where the Shanahan family had originally lived. Because that school was rather difficult of access for children from other areas of the parish it was inevitable that a new school would eventually be opened near the centre, beside the old thatched church, in fact.

The records state that this new school was established on 11 August 1862, and 'taken into connection' on 18 February 1863. The Roll No. 5,632 indicates that by then 5,632 schools had been launched under the National School system as compared with the Roll No. 4,000 for Gortnagoona established in 1845. The original applicant for the Clohinch school was Fr Peter Murphy who was curate of Templederry at the time. The school consisted of one room 33'x 17'x 10'8''. By 19 February 1880, when Joe would have been ca 9 years, a report on the school states that an urgent letter had been addressed to the Manager as to the extreme necessity of providing more commodious school accommodation – that the school room calculated for less than 50 pupils has often nearly twice that number in attendance. It specifically mentions that the privies were in a very filthy condition.³

The Clohinch-Templederry girls' school nearby is reported as being locally established on 11 August 1862 and 'taken into connection' on 18 February 1863. In reply to the statistical heading "How situated in respect of a Religious House?" the comment is: "The Chapel grounds adjoin the plot from which the site is taken but there is no other connection."

It was natural that the Shanahans should have attended the Clohinch schools by preference as they were quite close to their home and beside the parish church where they attended Mass. That was also the route their father and their mother would have taken when on the way to work in the O'Ryan house and farmyard. Unfortunately little is known about the students of this school for the years the Shanahans were in attendance as the register for the relevant period has not been located. Details about the managers, trustees and teachers are available in the Department of Education files in the National Archive. The main teacher mentioned over the years was one John O'Dwyer. As O'Dwyer was a common name in the area

there are no firm grounds for believing that he was related to the Shanahan's benefactor John Dwyer O'Ryan, who was later to serve as trustee for the new Girls' School at Clohinch. To say that the teacher John O'Dwyer was not regarded highly by the Inspectors over the years would be an understatement. There are comments such as "John O'Dwyer's conduct in making an inaccurate return of School Fees in his Report is regarded as exceedingly reprehensible", and "Teacher J. O'Dwyer reprimanded for not having Rolls called and attendance entered at the proper time."

Most of these offences would not have affected the students, as they had to do with proper procedures in keeping accounts etc. It was a period of intense pressure on teachers as the 'Payment by Results' system had been introduced in the early 1870s in the hopes of putting pressure on all to improve standards. Inspectors were notorious for checking on conformity to the regulations.⁴ Their methods of testing the students tended to concentrate on what was readily examinable with a view to a standard type of reporting in order to arrive at a decision about the Results Fees to be paid to each teacher. John O'Dwyer's rather cavalier approach to matters valued by Inspectors may possibly give some indication of his attitude also to his students. In later years he seems to have been on poor terms with at least some of his students. In the records he features in one very serious lapse in physical abuse and this proved the last straw for the authorities. They terminated his employment. But that was in January 1899 long after Joseph had left school.

The Shanahan boys Joe and Dick had in fact ceased to attend the Clohinch school from December 1884 and transferred to the older school at Gortnagoona. The records show that from the start of January in 1885 Joseph and Richard Shanahan are entered in the Gortnagoona register and are mentioned as having previously been in attendance in Clohinch. There is no evidence to show that there was any disagreement with the school authorities regarding this switch from school to school, and later we shall see that three members of the Shanahan family applied for the vacant post of assistant teacher in Clohinch, namely Michael, John and Mary. There is also mention of a Bridget Shanahan acting as monitor there. The reason for the transfer to Gortnagoona school may well be the overcrowding in the boys' school that had been a source of concern for some years. The matter was so urgent that the new manager Fr John McCormack, who succeeded Fr Gleeson early in 1886, decided that his first priority must be to deal urgently with this situation. As the girls' and boys' schools were under the same roof he decided to have a new school erected for the girls and have the vacated space made available for the boys. That was after the Shanahans had already transferred to Gortnagoona.⁵

Whereas the Clohinch schoolhouse has long since been demolished the Gortnagoona schoolhouse is still extant – albeit in a dilapidated condition and serving as a farm outhouse. It still has the stone plaque with the inscription 'Templederry National School.' It too was quite small and would seem to have served as the school for boys and girls. It was about a half mile away across the fields from the Shanahan homestead but much longer if approached by road, as they may have had to do at times in winter. When it rained heavily their father gave them his big herd's overcoat and they all managed to share its shelter as they made their way to school. When travelling by the beaten path they made a short cut through the backyard of the family living across the road from the school. Their own close relatives lived in the area, including their aunt, Johanna. As the Shanahan family originally lived in that area the father may well have also attended the Gortnagoona school which had been in operation since 1845.

In later years when home from Africa Bishop Shanahan liked to cross these fields with his nieces and nephews holding on to his hands. He chatted with the local people and obviously relished being among them again. At least on one occasion in the 1930s he addressed the students in the school and pointed out the desk where he had sat. One boy who was very much impressed by the Bishop's visit and his address later went on for the priesthood and became a missionary himself.

There had been a network of private schools varying in size and standards in the area prior to the launch of the National Schools in the 1830s. The National School system was well established by the 1870s and, though Teacher Training Colleges were not yet the force that they were to be later, there was a system of apprenticeship in operation that helped to train so-called monitors i.e. senior students who were seen to have the capacity and flair to act as tutors to younger students. These could apply for the post of Assistant Teacher once they reached the age of seventeen. Later if judged successful they would be "called for training" in one or other of the Training Colleges that were eventually opened. It is well authenticated that many of the national teachers were highly competent and provided a remarkable standard of tuition in the days before secondary schools became readily available. In some cases students from national schools in the diocese of Killaloe went directly to the Queen's College in Galway.

We have no written record of anything about Joseph Shanahan's school experience at Clohinch or Gortnagoona where he was known to the students as Joe. We do have his testimony about the backup to school work in the family home. Fr Reginald Walker CSSP, who has written well on Shanahan as he knew him in later life, recalled Bishop Shanahan's talks to them as students in the senior seminary. He quoted him as saying: 'You people study education problems in books and at universities. I learnt its value from my father. When the neighbours used sit around the fire at night discussing the social problems of the time, I often heard him say: 'Davitt said "Agitate, agitate." But I say, "Educate, educate."' He believed in education as the most potent of all means to the improvement of a people. As we sat around the table in the evenings doing our homework, he would pass around studying our efforts, encouraging, correcting, and at the end of the week there would be an examination with a prize for the best.⁶

That insight into the family approach to education speaks volumes in that it portrays an ambience of eagerness to learn from their school tasks and from one another. In the language of the day the Shanahans were all known as 'great scholars'. It is not surprising then that at least three members of the family were to make application for the post of Assistant Teacher in the Clohinch school.

Apart from the standard school texts books may have been a rarity for them but they had ears and eyes open to what was to be learnt from real life around them. The National School curriculum at that period was notorious in that it did not encourage nature study nor the love of local culture or history. But the Shanahan children learned to appreciate the beauty of God's creation as they crossed the fields to and from school, noticing the changes brought by the seasons in the life of plants, flowers and birds. It has been mentioned that on the way to school across the fields that they often surprised partridges who were nesting in the long grass. As Joseph noted the snails and slugs that were in profusion at certain times, the last thing that would have entered his mind no matter how ravenous he might have been was to swallow one of these creeping things in the raw. And that was what he had to do within a few years in France when he felt the honour of his nation was at stake.

because the French students dared him to swallow one of their species of snails, perhaps after he had made fun of their reputed taste for that national delicacy.

The French system of education at that time had a far more liberal and enlightened approach to the study of art and nature than was experienced under the National School system and the Intermediate or Secondary programme introduced in 1878 by the Intermediate Board examinations. Shanahan may have found the change over to the French system exceedingly challenging in the early stages but he was to profit from it once he had mastered French sufficiently. Later in later life it came naturally to Shanahan to relish a French scientific book that came to hand about the life of bees. And it is recorded that while walking one day with a young friend during his retirement he plucked a leaf from a tree and commented that there were billions of leaves each year and that no two were exactly the same. He had a life-long interest in nature study but this scientific approach never led him to forget that the world of nature in which we live is God's work made for the benefit of intelligent beings, and that for those who were attuned to God's plans they could sense that He was but thinly disguised behind the beauty and infinite variety of nature. The joy Joseph always found in the variegated beauty of nature was not something he learned from books but rather from his sensitivity to the life of nature in the countryside as he grew up. Often we find spontaneous snatches in his letters later where he comments on the beauty of the territory he has just passed through, and he expresses the hope that people would be led from viewing the beauties of nature to having a sense of the beauty of God. To quote two extracts from his letters on this topic: "One is brought by the beauty of God's works into ever closer contact with him who designed them and keeps them in existence"; and "The beauties of land and sky and stream and woodland find a tongue in the hearts and tongues of Irish Catholics to praise and thank God and glorify him in their name."

The landscape to be seen from the Shanahan homestead was especially uplifting. It was also challenging in that it was no level flatland but abounding in rolling hills with varying shades of light and colour throughout the year and indeed often throughout the day. The easily recognisable countryman's stride was naturally acquired by him as he had continually to travel on foot, there being no other mode of transport. This early physical training was to pay dividends in his long and frequent treks through the Nigerian bush. This was all part of his rounded education.

His formal education in the basics of the Christian religion was part of the curriculum in the National School. Most of the work of teaching formal religion was attended to by the teacher, because, although in theory the national school system was originally intended to be non-denominational, since the majority of students were Catholics and the manager was normally the local Catholic pastor, the ethos of the school was a continuation of the ethos of the home and the church. This posed problems when Protestant children attended a Catholic school or *vice-versa*. We find an echo of this in the official report on the Clohinch girls' school attended by Shanahan's sisters at the time – 1884. Protestant children having no certificates from their parents allowing them to remain in the school during the *Angelus* and the sign of the cross being made 'when the clock strikes' must have had some objection made on their behalf. According to the Register the teacher gave up directing the children to make the sign of the cross at this time and solved the *Angelus* problem by allowing the Protestant children out to play while the Catholic children spent a few minutes saying the *Angelus* before going out to join the Protestant children for playtime.

We find this home-to-school ethos summarised by Shanahan later in his so-called 'Magnificat': "Once more I wish to say how full my heart is with gratitude to

Our Lord and to all those who in his name and authority – with such charity and mercy – have co-operated with Him in bringing me into the Catholic church – my good parents and the parish priest – in teaching me in school – my school teacher; in making my home life happy – my parents and Our Lord...”

The parish priest referred to, Fr Michael Gleeson, was born in Toomevara ca 1811. Ordained in Maynooth in 1847 - the year of the Great Famine - he had served in several places in the Diocese of Killaloe, including Nenagh and Tulla, before being appointed to Templederry in 1869. He was to serve there for most of the years while Joseph Shanahan was growing up, and he was Manager of the schools. In December 1885, Fr Gleeson was transferred to Castleconnell where he was to serve till his death in 1893 aged 82. His memory was honoured there by a plaque in the parish church. Fr Gleeson's successor was Fr John McCormack and he was to remain on as Parish priest till 1911 when he decided to retire due to age. He had the reputation of being a holy man, and it is recalled that he and Fr Shanahan were close friends in later life. One presumes that Shanahan was recalling both pastors in the tribute in his Magnificat to the priest of the parish.

The name of the schoolteacher referred to by Shanahan in his Magnificat has not been discovered to date. Most likely he is referring to the teacher he had at Gortnagoona for the last year-and-a-half of his primary school days. But in typical Shanahan generosity he may have been recalling all his teachers, including the wayward John O'Dwyer.

That there was such an ambience of religion and piety in the Shanahan home as recalled by Joseph later was due not merely to the formal teaching of religion through the Catechism learned by heart at school but mainly to the spontaneous way they learned to turn to prayer in the family home. Morning prayers and grace before and after meals and the recitation of the Angelus were the norm for all members of the family in Irish Catholic homes of the period. The principal common prayer was of course the family Rosary participated in by all. The five decades of the rosary were normally said in turn by each member beginning with the parents followed by each of the children in the order of seniority. There were the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries of the Rosary honoured on successive days. The significance of these different mysteries would later be expanded on by Shanahan for the members of the religious society of Sisters he founded known as the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary: he was to remind them that all human life is like a rosary with its succession of Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious events.

But as well as the formal rosary with the summary of the Mysteries being recited, there were what came to be known as the ‘trimmings’ – special prayers for various topical intentions. And these tended to be added to. Then as the vocal prayers ended there was normally a period of silence when all were encouraged to reflect quietly on the events of the day. People were later struck by the fact that Fr Shanahan always referred to Mary as The Blessed Virgin and not as Our Lady. That was, of course, the traditional name of Mary in the Irish language, namely *An Mhaighdean Bheannaithe*.

We have no account of the Rosary as recited in the Shanahan home but in the first extant letter from Fr Shanahan to a member of his family – to his father - we catch a glimpse of what the family rosary still meant to him and the special place given to St Joseph. The letter was written in 1906 when Shanahan, then recently appointed Prefect Apostolic of Southern Nigeria, was en route to Rome. He stopped off at Susa in the Italian Alps where St Joseph's Apostolic School, which originated in France, had taken refuge from the Combes anti-clerical regime. This was the school

that had been attended by Joseph, 1886-89, when it was located in Beauvais. On the back of a picture postcard of St Joseph he wrote:

"My Dearest Father,

It was at the foot of this statue of St Joseph that I said my first prayers in France twenty-one years ago, prayers in which your name and Mother's were surely mentioned. The French persecution has driven St Joseph from France. Fancy my delight to see the good St Joseph once again here in the heart of the Italian Alps. Needless to say, your name with Mother's, not forgetting Bridgie, Dan and all the absent ones, were once more mentioned in prayer before the venerable saint. May his blessing and protection ever be with you.

On Monday I go to Rome. Don't forget me in the Rosary. I want to obtain very special assistance, which humanly speaking, I won't get; but if you pray hard to St Joseph I am sure all my wishes will be realised – the more so as they are for all those I love, at home, and for those other ones equally dear to me in distant Africa.

Good bye for the present, with my best love to Mother and all at home. St Joseph's blessing on us all, and he is your own Saint, Father. Do not forget it. He will be your best friend to the end."

The centre of religious life in each parish was the local church. It had not always been so in Ireland. During the not-so-distant penal days no public Catholic churches were officially allowed. Mass was said, whenever a priest was available, in remote and discreet spots in the open air or in safe houses of some size. Even when churches were later tolerated they were never permitted to be located in public prominent places. Since Catholic emancipation in 1829 a vast programme of church building was in progress, interrupted only by the famine years. With the appointment of Archbishop Paul Cullen to Armagh and later to Dublin a steady process of bringing the Irish church into line with Roman practice was put in motion. One aspect of this approach was the discouraging of the custom of the 'station house' masses that had become normal practice during the penal days when Catholic churches had been proscribed. The parish church from then on was, in accordance with Canon Law, to be the centre of religious worship for the faithful.

Prior to 1873 the Templederry church was a thatched building located away in from the main road but quite adjacent to the Shanahan home. This church, dating from 1813, has long since disappeared. Joe would have been familiar with it and may even have begun his attendance at mass there. If he retained any image of that thatched church he must have been reminded of it as he began his ministry in Nigeria in improvised thatched constructions.

Of Fr John Kenyon, PP, 1860-69, it was said that 'his parochiate was full of works in stone and mortar' He built a church in Curreeny in 1860 and in Killeen in 1862. He built a parochial house in Templederry. It was left, however, to his successor, Fr Michael Gleeson, to set about building a new church at Templederry. The delay may have been due to a dispute among his parishioners as to where the new church should be located. Quoting from a local history: "At that time a deputation of the parishioners waited on the bishop, Dr James Ryan, at Killaloe where the bishop then lived; and requested that two churches would be built, one in Latteragh and one in Templederry; but Dr Ryan did not approve of the request, and consequently only one large church was erected at Templederry..."⁷ It was decided then to concentrate all on Templederry and build one splendid and spacious parish church there. Much preparation and collecting of funds must have accompanied this initiative. The type of church finally agreed on must have cost a fortune for that period - solidly built in local

cut stone with an apse and transept and rose window. Great credit must go to the local pastor, Fr Michael Gleeson, as he may well have not received much assistance from the diocesan authorities. The diocese of Killaloe was actually without its resident bishop from 1869 to 1901. Bishop Michael Flannery, who took over the running of the diocese in 1859, had retired in ill health to Paris within ten years but was to outlive two of his three successive coadjutors! Reporting to Rome in 1887, the Papal Legate, Mgr Persico, said the diocese of Killaloe carried on as if ‘it did not have a bishop’. Bishop James Ryan, to whom the running of the diocese was entrusted in 1872, was himself ‘old and affected with paralysis’ by 1887.⁸

The Templederry new church was begun in 1873 just as the Shanahan family was transferring from Glankeen to Gortmalaura. It was not fully completed till 1877, when Joseph would have been six years old, but from their home he would have been fascinated by this big building as it gradually rose on the horizon. It was in this new church dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of Mary that he received his first Holy Communion. And it was there, one presumes, that he received the sacrament of Confirmation though no register of such events was kept at the time. The coadjutor bishop at the time (1871-89) was Dr James Ryan. It seems that the name Joseph took at his confirmation was Ignatius Loyola as he signed himself at times Joseph Ignatius, and in the spiritual notebook he compiled during his novitiate year in France he lays stress on the teaching of St Ignatius about the obedience required of members of a religious society.

As he was within a half-mile of the church Joseph took his turn as mass server on Sundays and weekdays. In later life he recalled his efforts at learning the Latin responses by heart. When home on holidays he liked to revisit the scenes of his childhood. As he called to the family home of that period, by then being used by a family called Dawson, he pointed out various places around the house that had vivid memories for him. In particular he pointed to a window sill saying: “There is where I used learn my Catechism by heart. One day when I was struggling with the Latin responses for serving mass my brother said ‘You will never learn it. You are a blockhead!’” This was probably Michael who by then had spent two years in the Juniorate at Blackrock College and had some hopes of being employed as assistant in the local school. The family tradition is that Joseph and his other senior brother John were always very close friends then and later.

The main ‘devotions’ of the period were Benediction on Sunday evenings and the devotion to the Sacred Heart as expressed in attending mass and receiving Holy Communion on the first Friday of nine consecutive months. Shanahan in his letters later frequently mentions his strong devotion to the Sacred Heart which may have well stemmed from this period. That he had happy memories of the contribution of the local priest to the religious life of the parish is emphasised by his inclusion of the priest in his Magnificat of thanksgiving for the strong faith passed on to him in his youth. As Fr Gleeson was also manager of the primary schools in the parish he would have visited the schools on occasion to examine the students in Christian doctrine. The same would have been true of his successor Fr McCormack, who was officially recognised as manager in March 1886.

One consequence of Cardinal Cullen’s reform of church life in Ireland was the discouraging of certain traditional aspects of Irish Catholic religious practice. These were already on the wane with the disappearance of the Irish language where so many sayings, poems and short prayers were moulded by the faith as expressed in a vernacular idiom. The new English hymns and acts of consecration etc were phrased in a type of diction that could not be classed as racy or of-the-soil for people living in

the countryside in Ireland. Local celebrations in honour of Irish saints and shrines tended to be frowned on, particularly the ‘patterns’ or festivals in honour of the local patron as quite frequently such celebrations ended in faction fights.⁹ As the Roman Calendar was henceforth to be the norm for the liturgical celebrations, Irish saints were neglected. Very few of the Irish saints appeared in the Roman calendar as the vast majority of them were hailed as saints only by popular acclamation.

Templederry area had its own local saint, namely Odrain (Odhrán), who had been sent by St Canice of Aghaboe away back in the sixth century to build a monastery at Latteragh and become its first abbot. It became a well-known centre of piety and learning.¹⁰ The original name - *Letracha Odhráin* - meaning the hillsides of Odhrán - highlights the hilly character of the area in general. Though little of that early foundation survived into the nineteenth century, Odhrán’s memory would have been still very much alive for the people while the Irish language was in use. The annual pattern held on 15 August at Latteragh helped to keep the memory of its past glory still vivid and it was one of the many local influences that would have moulded Joseph Shanahan’s outlook at a sensitive age. There is no record, however, of his having spoken about such matters.

Glankeen, where Joseph was born, had also been a noted religious centre made famous by St Cúilán the memory of whose bell ‘*Bearnan Cúiláin*’ is still very present to the local people. In later times the parish centre shifted to the more populous Borrisoleigh where the first post penal day church was built some distance away from the main street. In this fine church, built in 1893 and dedicated to the Sacred Heart, there is an exact replica of St Cúilán’s enshrined bell. The original is in the British Museum.¹¹ No doubt as Joseph visited Borrisoleigh with his parents on shopping outings or on fair days he was shown the place where he had been born and he must have visited the church where he had been baptised as it was then still in use as the parish church.

That Bishop Shanahan was to treat with respect the local religious traditions of Nigeria must have been due to the attitude imbibed as he grew up in Tipperary. And we know that he was very happy to receive from his family each year a sprig of Shamrock to celebrate St Patrick’s Day. His veneration of the shamrock as a symbol of the Blessed Trinity and of the Irish faith was given clear expression in the Crest he had designed when appointed bishop.

There is no record of how the Shanahan children were occupied once school was over but in those days all members of the family had chores to attend to inside and outside the house. The girls would in time have learned to help their mother at aspects of the housework, and the boys would have outdoor duties in attending to what cultivation was being done. The average for school attendance at that time was as low as thirty-seven percent in country areas. Boys were very much involved in small chores in farm work in summer time, weeding crops, saving hay etc. One family memory recalled from those haymaking days was of their father regaling them with songs as he worked. He had a fine singing voice. A song he loved to sing began “Mine be a cot on the side of the mountain”.

Again in harvest time there were plenty of jobs for them as part of the *meitheal* or neighbourly pooling of labour on special big occasions in farm work. Normally there was no question of remuneration for such work – just that they were well fed and at times provided with ‘refreshments’. It is possible that they were called on from time to time to help their father in his duties as herd of the three farms, acting as an extra sheep dog in the marshalling of sheep and cattle etc. especially on mornings when he had to set out early for fairs. The nearest of these fairs was the one

held in August in Borrisoleigh, but from time to time fairs farther afield would be attended. Nenagh was ca 12 miles from Templederry and Thurles ca 19, but drovers at the time seemed to have taken such long distances literally in their stride.

Though most of their travelling would be done on foot one can be sure that Joseph was familiar with the horses owned by John Dwyer O’Ryan and which his father would have tended as part of his duties. A possible meaning of Gortnalaura, as we have seen, may be ‘The Mare’s field’, a specially fenced-in area – surrounded actually by a tree-lined ditch. Because it was on the slope of the hill it would not have been used for tillage. It is there Joe would have been familiar with the mare and her foal. From time to time he must have ridden one of the horses as he helped in his father’s work. Perhaps it was such memories that were in the back of his mind years later when he came up with an unusual answer when he was bidding farewell to the students at Kimmage as he was about to return for the last time to Africa in 1938. One of the more outspoken students remarked to him that it was a bit unusual for a man of his years to be returning to the missions. He is reported as replying: “I am like an old horse now. An old horse can’t do what it could do easily once – jump a fence with ease. But if you straighten up the old horse and face it to the fence with some encouragement it will manage to clear it.”

The only occasion we hear of Shanahan riding a horse was when at home from Nigeria he set off on a journey on horseback. Unfortunately the heavens opened and he was thoroughly drenched. At Knocknahorna he called in to a house owned by a Mrs Ryan for shelter till “the shower is over”. As the shower persisted he was invited to stay for the night. He declined the offer of a bed as he did not want to deprive any of the family of their night’s sleep. So he sat by the fire drying his clothes! It is said that Mrs Ryan sat up also through the night with him fascinated with his stories about life in Africa. She recalled that he recommended that she say the Hail Holy Queen three times each day for the grace of a happy death. It is recorded that Mrs Ryan did have a very happy death.

Shanahan recalled the neighbouring farmers gathering at evening time to discuss social matters around the fire in their home. Certain houses were preferred for such *cuardaoicht* or *scoraiocht*, namely get-togethers for discussions of topical matters, for storytelling or card playing for a turkey in the run up to Christmas. Often the venue chosen depended a lot on the woman of the house being a welcoming type of person. One feels that though Daniel Shanahan owned no property of his own his status as herd to a large property owner gave his opinions a special value. He was vocal and was in contact with a wider world as he frequently attended fairs. Perhaps also he had access the following day to whatever newspapers were got by John Dwyer O’Ryan, who referred to him in his will as “my faithful servant”. It was from such reading they would have learned about the statements of Davitt and the happenings during the Land League movement and about the launch of the GAA at the historic meetings at Hayes Hotel in Thurles in the mid 1880s.

There is no information to hand about the games played by young people in the area as Joseph Shanahan grew up, but as hurling was the traditional game in the district he would at least be very familiar with the game. And there must have been rejoicing as the news spread about the launch of the Gaelic Athletic Association in nearby Thurles, and in particular the impetus given to native Irish sport by the great Archbishop of Cashel, Dr Thomas Croke, whose residence was in Thurles. As Joseph was later to be a keen and skilled rugby player when he was appointed to the teaching staff at Rockwell College it can be taken for granted that he was naturally athletic and interested in sport.

The year 1881 brought changes for the Shanahan family. Br Adelm, who had been a member of the Blackrock College community, was given a new posting – this time to the Motherhouse of the Congregation in Paris. Brothers had each his *métier* or trade to be of help in the material running of the community or mission. There is no record of what Br Adelm's work was at Blackrock but when in France we find him listed as *refectorien*, that is serving in the dining room for the community and students, attending to the wash-up and preparing the tables for meals. He must have already made some acquaintance with French as was customary in all communities of the Congregation. He was destined henceforth to become quite conversant with spoken French, and years later, when this was discovered by the Dean of Studies (Principal) in Rockwell, he was to be co-opted on to the college teaching staff

What was to affect the Shanahan family nearer home was that Joseph's older brother Michael, who had been attending the Juniorate at Blackrock, ceased to do so once Brother Adelm left for France. The records say: "September 1881 Michael was asked to remain at home." By then it was realised that, as he had no vocation to the priesthood, there was no purpose in his being kept on in the Juniorate and there was no question of his being able to afford the fees normally charged in the boarding school. That was part of the normal selection process in a junior seminary, but it must have been quite an embarrassment to the Shanahan family when they learned of the decision. It must also have proved a problem for Michael because the education aimed at under the so-called 'Intermediate' or secondary system introduced in 1878 concentrated on an academic programme aimed at achieving results in the public examinations. Schools and successful students qualified for grants of money in proportion to their performance in these public tests – 'results fees', that is. Providing practical skills for success in life was not a priority for the designers of these examinations or the programme of studies. And the religious training provided in the Junior Seminary was not exactly designed for preparing young men for living in the secular world. And, above all, neither the academic nor the religious formation was geared in any way to life on the farm. As Michael was by then nearly fifteen years of age it is unlikely that he would have integrated into the local school once more unless he had designs on being accepted as a monitor with a view to applying for the post of Assistant teacher when the occasion arose.

In fact the next time we find Michael mentioned in despatches is in the records of the Department of Education. For 14 July 1884 it is mentioned that the Manager had been informed that Michael Shanahan couldn't be recognised as Assistant, being underage. For the following year the Manager was informed that the appointment of a Temporary Assistant couldn't be sanctioned as the average of students attending the school since his application was not sufficient to justify the employment of an extra teacher. The difference then between the financial remuneration for an Assistant teacher and a labourer was not great: the salary for the former could range from £19 to £20; the labourer's wage ranged from £16 to £23. So there was not much to choose between them except that a teacher's post was more secure normally. It is not known how long Michael lived in the family home and if he had much influence on the education of the others, giving them the benefit of what he had learned during the two years at Blackrock. He may well have been coaching Joe in Latin for reciting the responses for serving mass when the uncomplimentary comment was made to him. "You will never learn it. You are a blockhead!" It is thought that Michael later emigrated to Australia

The Gortnagoona (Templederry) school register indicates that Joseph Shanahan was in 5th Class in January 1885 when he transferred from Clohinch

School. He was then midway through his fourteenth year. He was to remain on at Gortnagoona till 31 July 1886, that is, until he had finished 6th class and was by then 15 years of age.

It has been stated from time to time that Joseph entered the Juniorate at Rockwell at this stage. There is no evidence for this in the Rockwell records where not merely the Juniorate register but also the community journal lists the members of the Juniorate for 1885-86. There were actually only nine students in the Juniorate at the time, and as the numbers showed no sign of increasing the Juniorate was fated to be temporarily transferred to Blackrock College within a few years. One can but wonder why Br Adelm had made no attempt to arrange that Joseph might be accepted in the Rockwell juniorate at the time as the paucity of numbers was due not merely to lack of financial resources but to the absence of any wide contact with the public. There was no organised promotional system as yet to search for vocations throughout the country. With the gift of hindsight we can see that Providence had other plans for the special formation of the future Apostle of Southern Nigeria

In the Rockwell context one promotion venture is worth noting. From 1883 a publication known as the *Messenger of St Joseph* was edited in Rockwell. The contents were mainly translations of articles appearing in the magazine of that name published in the Apostolic School conducted by the Holy Ghost Congregation in Beauvais in the north of France. The editor of this English version was the President of Rockwell, Fr Prosper Goepfert, a Frenchman, but he called on the prefects or junior clerical masters to do much of the preparation of the text for the printer. Poems of little literary merit by members of the community found their way into print. Items of Irish public interest were also included especially about the public events connected with the two great archbishops, Dr William Walsh of Dublin and Dr Thomas Croke of Cashel. There were always snippets about the foreign missions, especially Africa. In the 1885-86 issues there were articles about the life and death in Angola of the young Tipperary-born priest, Fr John Hogan CSSp.

The purpose of the original French magazine was to promote the work of the Archconfraternity of St Joseph based in Beauvais, and make known the work done there at the Apostolic School bearing the Saint's name. Favours attributed to the intercession of St Joseph were given prominence. It is not known if issues of this magazine edited in Rockwell College came to be read in the Shanahan household. Unsensational as was the content and style by today's standards it would be quite exciting at the time for the Shanahan family to have available such a publication connected with the Congregation of which Br Adelm was a member. And one can be sure that Br Adelm would not be slow to alert the family to the existence of the magazine. It would also have special interest for Michael as he would have known of some of the people mentioned in despatches. A monthly magazine, the subscription for one year including postage is given as 5 shillings. It would be of interest to know if the first seeds of a missionary vocation were sown in Joseph's heart as he read the pages of this magazine dedicated to his patron saint. In a letter to his father in later years he reminds him of the special devotion he had to St Joseph. That too could well have stemmed to some extent from reading the magazine. And as for Joseph himself, by the end of the next school year as he had reached the age of fifteen he was destined to be brought into very close contact with the Apostolic School at Beauvais where the original of the *Messager de Saint Joseph* was being produced.

After one year at the Mother House in Paris Br Adelm was transferred to the college in Mesnières College in the north of France conducted by the Holy Ghost Congregation where the use of English was considered very useful because of the

proximity with England. Br Adelm served there from 1882 to 1886. It is not known if he returned home during that period. It was not the normal practice to do so at the time in the Congregation.

By 1886, however, Br Adelm was again on the move – not very far - this time to Beauvais where the Congregation had been entrusted by the Diocese to take charge of the Apostolic School there sponsored by the Archconfraternity of St Joseph. No reason is given for the change but in the designs of Providence this change was to prove critical in the life of young Joseph Shanahan.

Beauvais was the centre of a thriving confraternity devoted to St Joseph. One of their projects was providing free bursaries or scholarships for students wishing to serve as priests in the diocese of Beauvais. The Congregation of the Holy Spirit, as the Holy Ghost Fathers were known in France, was asked to take charge of the running of this confraternity. When Fr Amet Limbour, recently returned from the foreign missions, was appointed to this chaplaincy he decided to enlarge its apostolate so as to help poor students who desired to be priests. He visualised the school as a junior seminary which was to cater for other dioceses beside Beauvais, and also for religious orders once the students reached a certain age and were capable of making their own choice. The Archconfraternity had to be redeveloped to fund this project and the school was named St Joseph's Apostolic School. Fr Limbour further developed his plans to give the school an international flavour. He took in students from French overseas territories, and there were plans to take students also from German and English-speaking areas.

When Fr Limbour learned from Br Adelm that he had a nephew who was interested in becoming a priest but had not the financial resources required in Ireland, he agreed that Br Adelm should contact Joseph with a view to his being received in the Apostolic School.

We know nothing of the run-up to this offer and of Joseph's acceptance. Obviously Br Adelm would have been in contact with the family by letter and he would have known of Joseph's dispositions. We presume that it was Br Adelm who made the travel arrangements and that Joseph had to travel alone. This was quite a challenge for a boy who probably never was previously on a train. And without a word of French he must have felt like that German student, Anton Spiess, who was to travel in the opposite direction from Germany to Rockwell with a plaque around his neck bearing his name and address! Even to get to the nearest station, namely Nenagh or Thurles, must have proved a problem in those days. One can well imagine, however, that John Dwyer O'Ryan provided the transport.

One can only try to imagine the leave-taking at the home of this closely-knit family. Mercifully they were not to know that it would be over eleven long years before any member of the family would lay eyes on Joseph again. And in fact he was never to return to that family homestead in Gortnalaura. Much would have changed for the better in the family fortunes during those eleven years including a new and more spacious residence. Finally, there is no record that the Provincial Superior, Fr Peter Huvéty's residing at Blackrock, was made aware of Joseph's departure for Beauvais, nor was there any necessity that he be informed at that stage. Joseph was not in any way connected with the Congregation, as he would have been if he had been attending either of the Juniorates.

We return to the words written by Bishop Shanahan in his 'Magnificat' in 1931 as he prepared to leave his beloved Nigeria and enter into retirement:

"Once again I wish to say how my heart is full of gratitude to Our Lord and to all those who in his name and authority – with such charity and mercy – have co-

operated with Him... in making it possible for me to be a religious – poor old Br Adelm..in taking me, a poor boy, for nothing into a secondary school – Fr Limbour CSSp at Beauvais..”

As regards the members of the Shanahan family we take a brief look here at their subsequent careers.

Mary is mentioned in the Department of Education records for 1892 as follows: “That Miss Mary Shanahan 3/2 class be recognised as Temporary Assistant in above-named School (Clohinch Female i.e. Templederry Female) from 15 May 1892 under terms of Rule 170A”. Again for 10.1.1893 Mary Shanahan (3/2 class) is recognised as Assistant from 1 October 1892. Because of her age at the time this might only refer to monitor status. And finally for 29.8.1899: Miss Mary Shanahan appointed Temporary Assistant from 1.4.1899 as averages for year ended 31.12.1899, and for June and September quarters were over 60. The next time we catch up with Mary in official records is 7 November 1900 when she was married in Aughrim St Church, Dublin, to Joseph Dawson of Maynooth. The officiating priest was her brother Fr Joseph Shanahan, and she is described as Teacher residing at 30 Bessboro Terrace, North Circular Road, Dublin. The presumption is that she was teaching by then in Dublin. Henceforth she was to live in Maynooth where her husband’s family had a shop. It is possible that the Dawsons of Maynooth may have hailed from Templederry where the name was quite common in those years. A family of Dawsons – no relation - succeeded the Shanahans when they moved from the herd’s house to the new home in Clohinch bequeathed to them by John Dwyer O’Ryan. These Dawsons later transferred to a labourer’s cottage in the area.

Mary and her husband Joseph Dawson proved very supportive of Fr Shanahan for the rest of his life, and it was because of their influence that he gained access to Maynooth College in the interests on his mission. As they owned a garage business they were to provide Bishop Shanahan with a car as he travelled around Ireland in pursuit of his missionary projects. Mary was to die in March 1940 when Bishop Shanahan was in Nairobi. He received the news of her death on 17 March, the Feast of St Joseph. Understandably he was deeply affected by the news.

Michael, the eldest boy, who attended the Juniorate at Blackrock, 1879-81, is referred to in the Department of Education records for July 1884 as having applied for the post as Assistant teacher in Clohinch Boys’ School but that the manager, Fr McCormack, was informed that he was underage for the post. Michael emigrated to Australia. In an obituary for his brother John in 1924, where four of his surviving brothers are listed, Michael is given as “Mr Michael Shanahan, P.M., Queensland”. There is a vague tradition that he was to be elected mayor of a mining town but efforts to trace any documentary evidence about him have not met with any success to date.

John is mentioned also in the National Schools’ records: he was a Temporary Assistant teacher in Clohinch National School in 1889. Following in Michael’s footsteps he and Gerald (Jer) later emigrated to Australia on 22 December 1900 arriving in Victoria February 1901. Their decision to choose the Ballarat area in Australia was most likely influenced by Br Adelm who had earlier spent three years there (1888-91). John’s death certificate for 1924 mentions that he had been in Victoria 25 years at that time. He had been Principal of St Joseph’s Catholic Primary school where his wife Dora née McMahon taught the infant classes. They were married in 1910 and by coincidence the priest officiating at the wedding was a Fr-later Monsignor - Shanahan, but there is no suggestion that he was a relative. After some years John retired from his post as teacher to enter the stock and station agency business. There is a family tradition that he visited Ireland to see his mother who was

ailing at the time. At the time of his death, when he is described as an auctioneer, there were three children, Kathleen aged 14, Richard Daniel aged 10 and John Francis aged 6. Richard attended St Patrick's Christian Brothers College, Ballarat, where his granduncle Br Adelm Walsh had been one of the founders in 1888 when it was conducted by the Holy Ghost Congregation. After two years in the Jesuit College in East Melbourne Richard opted to join the Columban Fathers. Having done his Philosophy studies he was sent to St Columban's College, Dalgan Park, Navan, where he did his Theology and was ordained priest in 1942. Prevented by the war from returning to Australia he served for a few years in the midlands in England. Later he served for a period in Papua New Guinea before joining the diocese of Armidale where he was to spend the rest of his long life in very active and fruitful ministry especially among the aborigines. In the lengthy obituaries published after his death in November 1998 he comes through as a very lovable and successful pastor with many of the qualities of his uncle, Bishop Joseph Shanahan, whom it would appear he never met.

Gerald had emigrated to Australia together with John. Records show that they sailed from London port on 22 December 1900 arriving in Melbourne in February 1901 On his death certificate 9 June 1948 it is mentioned that he had been living in Victoria for 47 years, arriving then two years after John. Within two years he married Mary Jane Tierney and by then he signed himself as Jerald Walsh Shanahan having at some stage taken on his mother's family name. At this stage he is given as Hotel Keeper and his wife given as Lady. Her father was by profession a house dealer. By the time his brother John died in 1924 Gerald was described as being of the Victorian railway detective force. Gerald's daughter Molly married a man named Scully. Bishop Shanahan is known to have been in correspondence with her but the letters seemed to have perished in a spring-cleaning after her death. Her husband remarried. Apropos Gerald's taking on the name of his mother's family Walsh it is of interest that his mother's sister had emigrated to Sydney.

Patrick was to enter the Juniorate in Blackrock on 1 September 1888 where he is identified in the Juniorate account book as Br Adelm's nephew. (Cf. folio 502) Adelm was in Ireland at the time en route to Ballarat, Australia, where he had been assigned as part of the team who were to take charge of a college there. Patrick won a £10 prize in the public examinations in 1891. He remained at Blackrock till November 1891 when it was decided that he had no vocation to the priesthood. He was later to set sail for the USA. He is on record as having been home in Ireland in 1914 perhaps to coincide with Fr Joseph's return at that time from Nigeria in search of personnel.

It is not clear where Dick received his post primary education. Surprisingly we find him on the teaching staff in Rockwell in 1898 when Joseph and Br Adelm were stationed there. No doubt Br Adelm had arranged this. He features with Joseph in the Rockwell Rugby club team for 1898. It is said that when he was in Dublin for an operation for the removal of his appendix that he made up his mind to become a doctor. He took on a teaching post in the Christian Brothers' secondary school in Cork and attended the medical school at Queens College, Cork, qualifying as a doctor. Having qualified he served in the Manchester area and later in London. The Rockwell journal records for 15 Nov 1921 that Dick visited Rockwell with Bishop Shanahan and their sister Mary, Mrs Dawson. Bishop Shanahan visited Dick in England before setting off for East Africa in 1938. Dick later retired to Tipperary. He and Bishop Shanahan loved to walk the roads together revisiting the familiar haunts of their childhood and meeting the local people. It was said of Dick that, like Bishop

Shanahan, he would give away almost everything he possessed. Having been awarded a substantial amount by an insurance company he is said to have bought a motorcar for the Shanahan family in Templederry. He donated the present substantial sanctuary lamp hanging in the Templederry church. After spending some eighteen months with the Shanahan family in Clohinch he decided to return to his practice in England for a while before retiring permanently. In ill health he returned to Tipperary where he died in 1946. He is buried with his parents in the old chuchyard in Templederry, where the Protestant church is today.

Bridgie was to marry James Kelly N.T., who taught at Coolderry N.S. Borrisoleigh. Among his pupils was Thomas Quinlan, future Columban bishop in Korea. James Kelly owned a pub and grocery at Chapel St about fifty yards from the church where Bishop Shanahan was baptised. Bridgie and James had only one child, Josephine. Bridgie died rather young having contracted tuberculosis. Her daughter Josephine married Captain James (Jim) Murphy, based at Templemore Barracks. They subsequently moved to Kilkenny City where they owned a pub, which they sold after a few years and went to live in Monaghan. They had three children, a son and two daughters. One daughter married a German and lived in Monaghan. The other two live in Dublin.^{xii}

Maggie went to England where she is said to have trained as a teacher. She died of typhus in 1902. Fr Shanahan, then Dean of the boarding school in Rockwell, made the journey to England to officiate at the funeral. Later, when about to return to Africa for the last time, he made a point of visiting her grave.

Daniel, the youngest, inherited the family home, but that home was not to be merely the herd's house. John Dwyer O'Ryan of Clohonan, Templederry, is reported as having made a will in June 1893 which includes the following bequest: "to my faithful servant, Daniel Shanahan, my farm at Clohinch"

Daniel then moved into this new holding and dwelling which was to be the main Shanahan home ever since and the house to which Joseph was to return sometime after his eleven years exile in France. Daniel married and his son Daniel inherited the homeplace where his family live today. J.D.O'Ryan also handed over to the Shanahans a shop he owned in Templederry. This shop they rented out for a period and later sold. The Hogan family, who purchased Gortnalaura, own that shop today.

By the time Shanahan arrived back in Ireland in 1914 his father had died; his mother lived for some years longer.

Unfortunately few of Bishop Shanahan's letters to members of his family are to hand. We end with the one he wrote on a postcard to his brother Dick in 1906 from the Italian Alps during his trip to Rome. Both were by then were familiar with the Latin classics as can be seen from the reference:

To Mr R. Shanahan, Templederry, Co. Tipperary.

This is the heart of the Italian Alps, where the smallest mountain is seven thousand feet high, the highest about thirteen thousand. Winter is there above on the top of the hills, and here within a few yards away one would imagine is the most beautiful of the Italian summers; grapes, cherries, fruits of every description are just outside my window, and even the bees are not wanting! A grand opportunity to study the "Georgics" – the doughty Roman warriors alone seem to have changed. One of them carried a bag of mine yesterday, ten yards; ten francs asked – a small battle; the warrior defeated – threatened to tell Caeser to get the lictors to haul me up. Where will you hear from me next?

J.S.

¹ Shanahan's relatives cf. Fr Ned Ryan CSSp Video interview on Shanahan. Fr Ryan's great-grandmother was a sister of Shanahan's grandfather Mike.. It is said that the family of Mike's brother Con lived in Gortnagoona later. Tradition has it that the Shanahan clan came originally to Tipperary from Co. Limerick, where they were dispossessed by the O'Brien clan. For information on the Shanahans and the Templederry locality cf. notes taken in 1971 by Fr Jim Giltenan CSSp. HRS Archives. F. also 'Lord that I may see' by Sr Philomena Fox HRS pp i-ii

² Cf. 1901 Census

³ ⁴ Templederry Schools, Co. Tipperary – Research in National Archives, Dublin, December 2000 by Caroline Mullan. Cf. Shanahan Papers, 'Tipperary' file, Blackrock College Archives For an account of the National School system in the nineteenth century cf. *Irish Education history and structure* by John Coolahan 1981 pp 1-36

⁵ ⁶ For correspondence on this matter Cf. File 3766 re Clohinch School in the National Archives *The African Rosary* 1944 April-June p.7

⁷ ⁸ *History of Ely O'Carroll Territory* by Gleeson, Vol 11 pp.473ff

⁹ ¹⁰ *Bishops of Ireland 1870-1987* by Rev. Bernard J. Canning, 273

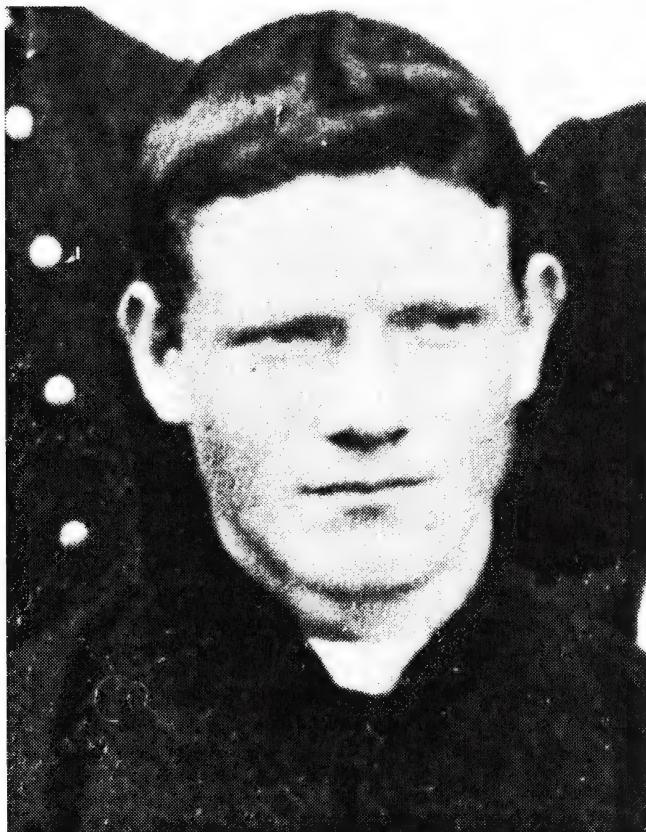
¹¹ Cf. Emmet and Larkin, *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism* p..77f

¹² *History of Ely O'Carroll* Vol 11 pp.473ff

Sacred Heart Chapel, Borrisoleigh 1893-1993; Glankeen of Borrisoleigh by M. Kenny, 1944 pp 7ff

Note supplied by Fr Denis Kennedy CSSp, native of Borrisoleigh

Studying in France 1886-1897



Joseph Shanahan – student in France 1894

Studying in France 1886-1897

To many it will come as a surprise to learn that Bishop Shanahan of Nigeria went direct to France from the national school in Tipperary. Stranger still: he was to spend the next eleven years in France without returning to Ireland, and so had no contact with the houses conducted by the Irish Holy Ghost Fathers during all those formative years. The first question to be answered then is how he came to by-pass the two juniorates of the Society in Ireland. The second and more fundamental question is what influence had those eleven years of virtual exile on the formation of the future apostle of Nigeria. This article sets out to detail the places, events, and persons connected with those eleven years, and for the most part leaving the facts and Shanahan's own words to tell the story.

We begin with a quotation from Shanahan's personal notebook for 25 November 1931 when he was preparing to leave Nigeria after his thirty years heroic work there:

Once again I wish to say how full my heart is with gratitude to Our Lord and to all those who in his name and authority - with such charity and mercy - have co-operated with him..” (There follows a tribute to his parents, his parish priest and his schoolteacher) “... In making it possible for me to be a religious - poor Brother Adelm; in taking me, a poor boy, for nothing into a secondary school - Fr Limbour, CSSp, at Beauvais ..”¹

Br Adelm

The old Juniorate register in Blackrock College has this entry for 20 September 1875: “Patrick Walsh, c/o Mrs D. Shanahan, Templederry, Co. Tipperary”. Mr and Mrs Daniel Shanahan, Templederry, were Joseph's parents and Patrick Walsh was his maternal uncle.²

That Patrick gave his sister's address would seem to imply that he was staying with the Shanahans at the time. They had, in fact, but recently moved to Templederry from Glankeen where Joseph Shanahan had been born in 1871. Patrick, having been born in 1853, was by then over twenty-two years and had been working on the land since he had finished his primary schooling. It took some courage and determination for him to opt for the priesthood at that stage and we can surmise that he was encouraged by his sister. One might ask why did he apply to the French College, Blackrock, rather than to Rockwell College nearer home as there was a juniorate there also? The explanation may lie in the new promotional drive for vocations launched by the authorities at Blackrock. They had commissioned some of the senior students in the juniorate to search for candidates for the priesthood in their own localities while they were at home during the summer. One such student was Joseph Gleeson from Silvermines, Co. Tipperary. In an extant letter to his director, Fr Joseph Spielmann, dated August 1874, he reports on his visit to the pastor, Fr McGrath, and to the local school.³

He had met with little success as vocations for the foreign (pagan) missions were not encouraged by parents or priests in those days. Interestingly a number of teachers themselves applied for admission to the juniorate at Blackrock at this time. Whether it was because of having to face two languages, Latin and French, or because of their age, two of those former teachers opted to become Brothers rather than going ahead to study for the priesthood. It is not surprising then that Patrick Walsh, who must have

found the pen harder to operate than the spade at this stage, opted for the brotherhood after but two months in the juniorate. He entered the Brothers' novitiate, then located in Rockwell, where he was professed in 1878 taking the name Adelm in religion, the name by which he was henceforth known (*Adelme* in French)⁴

In 1879 Brother Adelm was appointed to Blackrock where he joined the team of Brothers who looked after the various services in the community and college. He arranged that his nephew, Michael Shanahan, was accepted in the juniorate at Blackrock in 1879. In the earlier years of the Irish foundation, when there were as yet no priests available to serve in English-speaking missions, a newly-professed Brother could look forward to being sent on the missions once he had acquired sufficient knowledge of French to be able to fit into a community of Frenchmen. As there were less vocations to the brotherhood than required for the works at home, it was now becoming the exception for a Brother to be posted abroad, and very rarely to France where vocations to the Brothers were more numerous. However, in 1881, Br Adelm was transferred to the Mother house at rue Lhomond, in Paris. The following year he was posted to Mesnières College, in Normandy. One memorable ceremony that Br Adelm witnessed in Mesnières, and which was reported at length in the Irish papers, was the triumphal visit there of the newly ordained bishop of Dublin, Dr William Walsh, who was making his ceremonial visit to the tomb of his predecessor, St Lawrence O'Toole, at nearby Eu. On account of his close relations with Fr Reffé, Dean of Studies at Blackrock College, Dr Walsh decided to stay overnight at the Mesnières College conducted by the Holy Ghost Fathers.⁵

The following year, Br Adelm found himself on the move again, this time not very far, to another school run by the Holy Ghost Fathers at Beauvais. This was a rather unusual school, and its director was a very unusual man as we shall see directly. Shanahan mentions him explicitly in his list of benefactors given at the close of his Spiritual diary from which we have already quoted as follows: "in taking me, a poor boy, for nothing into a secondary school - Fr Limbour, CSSp, at Beauvais ..."

When the Holy Ghost Fathers were originally called to Beauvais it was merely to act as chaplains to a large educational complex run there by the De la Salle Christian Brothers. The former chaplain to the three schools there had launched a movement which had come to be known far and wide, The Archconfraternity of St Joseph. The local church had become a great centre of devotion to St Joseph and in time the ceremonies and the correspondence became too much of a burden for the ageing pastor. One of the causes espoused by the Archconfraternity was the providing of bourses or free places in seminaries for those intending to go on for the priesthood for the Beauvais diocese. That was the limited scope of their involvement until Fr Limbour burst on the scene. He was not the man to leave things or institutions as he found them.⁶

Père Limbour

A native of Brittany, Amet Limbour was so brilliant as a student that his bishop agreed only with reluctance to his joining the Holy Ghost Fathers. His first appointment was to Réunion in the Indian Ocean where he worked in the leper colony. Later he was transferred to Mauritius where he rebuilt and revitalised the ailing French College with some help in the matter of personnel and advice as to programming studies from Père Leman in Blackrock. His health cracked up under the pace set by himself and he had to return to France. While recuperating he was sent as assistant to the Spiritan (Holy Ghost Father) on duty at Beauvais namely, Fr Eschbach. On the sudden death of Père Freyd, rector of the French seminary in Rome

in 1875, Fr Eschbach was posted to Rome and Fr Limbour was asked to take charge at Beauvais. From that moment things began to move.⁷ Not content with the limited number of burses being catered for by the Archconfraternity of St Joseph, he decided to open a junior seminary which would provide free education not merely for students hoping to serve in the diocese of Beauvais but also for those who might opt for other dioceses or for the various religious orders once they had studied their vocation. This meant an intense expansion of the apostolate of the Archconfraternity requiring a constant flow of letters, pastoral meetings, etc. In order to qualify to run a private secondary school, Fr Limbour had to sit for a public examination at the faculty in Bordeaux. Nothing seemed to daunt him at this stage.

Demanding on himself, he was also demanding on others, even the students. The régime was strict, even Spartan by any standards, as he wanted to train future priests and missionaries: rising at five, washing in icy cold water, manual labour, a simple diet which must be consumed by all with no place for the squeamish. It was not that he was not kind to the students. The whole ethos of the school was centred on devotion to St Joseph as their patron and father. The students were aware of the public devotions in honour of the Saint which were organised for the people who thronged to the church and were aware that their daily bread came to them through the patronage of St Joseph.

In his dream of giving his school a more universal character, Fr Limbour accepted students from countries other than France, though the five countries mentioned for 1886 were all French-speaking. There were English visitors to Beauvais who are mentioned as calling to the seminary, including Dr Manning of Westminster, perhaps in search of vocations. A student, James Machin, who came as a boarder from Leeds to Blackrock College, was transferred to the apostolic school at Beauvais and later opted to join the Holy Ghost Congregation.

It is in this context that Joseph Shanahan enters. Fr Limbour heard Br Adelm speak of his young nephew in Ireland who wanted to go on for the priesthood. Once Limbour was satisfied that young Joseph was a suitable candidate he agreed to take him at Beauvais even though the normal procedure would have been that Br Adelm should have put Joseph in contact with Blackrock as he had done for his brother, Michael.

In a strange land

Joseph Shanahan was ten years of age when his uncle had left for France in 1881. It is unlikely that he had seen him in the intervening years as visits to one's family in those days were allowed only for serious reasons. Apart from the letters received from Br Adelm, Joseph and his family may have been rather well-informed on some aspects of Beauvais. One of Fr Limbour's innovations was the launching of a magazine entitled *The Messenger of St Joseph*, and from 1883 an English version of this periodical was being published at Rockwell by Fr Limbour's friend, Fr Prosper Goepfert, President of Rockwell. Items of news of Irish interest were regularly included, especially about the public events connected with the two great Archbishops, Walsh of Dublin and Croke of Cashel. Snippets about the foreign missions were also regularly included. In the 1885/86 issues there was a series of articles about the life and tragic death in Angola of Tipperary-born Fr John Hogan CSSp, former student of Rockwell. But the main theme of the magazine was devotion to St Joseph, favours attributed to him, etc. It would be quite natural for Br Adelm to alert the Shanahans to the existence of this publication. Devotion to St Joseph, we are told, was their family speciality. So when young Joseph got the sudden offer to come

over to Beauvais he was not altogether unprepared.

Nothing is known of how Joseph made the journey. What is certain is that Beauvais must have presented a daunting challenge for this boy coming straight from a national school right in the heart of the country. What an awesome sight must have been the cathedral beside the seminary. Its extraordinary lofted roof leaves even the jaded globe-trotting tourist spellbound. But Joseph's immediate problem was that he found himself struck dumb for lack of French. His uncle could act as his interpreter for essential matters but their contacts would be limited. The other students, even the African boys from the French missions, were in a superior position to him. And then to have to understand his teachers. He had not merely to learn French; he had to begin his studies of the classical languages, at first Latin and at a later stage he was introduced to Greek. But just as the Lord had planned Adelm's tortuous journey to Beauvais in Joseph's favour, so also He had arranged by an unusual series of happenings that there was one member of the community and teaching staff to whom he could relate as a teacher and confessor namely, Fr Gerald Griffin.

Fr Griffin, a native of Limerick, was one of four orphaned boys who were sent to Blackrock juniorate in the seventies.⁸ All four were ordained to the priesthood. Gerald was of a particularly retiring and gentle disposition, incapable of providing for himself. It was with a shock that Père Leman learned that he had been posted after his ordination to the very demanding mission of Angola. On finding that he was not able to cope or be of any use to his confrères in the primitive conditions of their surroundings in Namibia, Fr Gerald returned to Europe without waiting for the all-clear from headquarters. That was unpardonable in those days and it was not pardoned. He was sent to Beauvais, listed as a 'prefect' and remained under a cloud. But in the ways of providence his presence may well have made life tolerable for Joseph, and only God knows what Joseph's presence may have meant to this priest who felt he had been ostracised. These two men were to meet almost fifty years later in Clareville when Fr Griffin dropped in briefly from his wanderings around the world, and Beauvais must have been to the fore of their conversation.

One incident recorded in the life of Père Limbour serves to throw light indirectly on what Joseph may have had to suffer from time to time. It is mentioned that among the stories Limbour liked to recount with all the skill he possessed as a raconteur was a sermon preached by Fr Griffin where he was guilty of a notable malapropism. One can be sure that the nuances of the French language posed many a pitfall for young Joseph also, though the day would come when Frenchmen could scarcely believe that he was not French himself because of the ease with which he spoke the language.

Fr Griffin was not the only priest with whom Joseph could communicate through English. Alsace-born Fr Jacques Richert, who had spent five years in Rockwell (1867-1872) and had served for a brief period in Sierra Leone before going to work in America for eight years (1874-1882), was in the process of giving fifteen years in the service of the college at Beauvais. What influence he had on Shanahan is not recorded but as to his own reputation it is worth recalling that, when he died in USA in 1918, the Provincial wrote of him: "He was the saint of the Province".⁹

As no reports had to be sent to headquarters in Paris about the students at this apostolic college, we have no contemporary report on Shanahan at Beauvais. The nearest he comes to being mentioned in despatches is when the countries represented at Beauvais are named and Ireland is among them - the others being, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Guyana, Senegal and Canada. The following year Germany was also represented. Six students, who had opted to join the Benedictines but had yet to

complete their secondary studies, were placed at the apostolic college at Beauvais in 1888. One of these German students, Martin Vonier from Würtenburg, later became well known as Abbot Ascar Vonier of Buckfast Abbey in England.¹⁰ Abbot Vonier was to call to Blackrock in later years to renew his acquaintance with Shanahan, his former prefect, then living in retirement in Clareville

Not surprisingly several of these students went on to join the Holy Spirit Congregation, principal among them being Francis Xavier Vogt, later Vicar Apostolic of the Cameroon - a mission in which Shanahan was also to have a legendary role to play.¹¹

An incident recalled by Shanahan about his problems at Beauvais is reported as follows:

There are not many tales of the Bishop's school-days, but there is one that he used to tell himself, and tell inimitably! He was very young when he went to France to do his studies with a view to the priesthood and the Missions - then only 15 years of age. But he did not forget his allegiance to his native land. One day, some of his companions began to tease him about Ireland. The culminating-point came when they dared him to swallow a snail - for the honour of Ireland! Just how the honour of Ireland came into the matter is not quite clear, but a harder thing the tormentors could hardly have asked, for Joseph Shanahan was refined almost to fastidiousness, and the mere thought of such a feat nearly killed him. But the honour of his country was at stake - and he accepted this "dare"; the remembrance of the horns of the snail was always rehearsed with extra vivacity! How could he get the wretched slimy thing down! But - the honour of Ireland! With many a gigantic reminder to himself of the tremendous issues at stake, he actually succeeded in achieving the feat, and thereafter no one dared to question his courage or his patriotism! And the incident had a strange reward, for in after years as a Missionary in Nigeria he was often the honoured guest at native repasts where the strangeness of the dishes presented him with a problem as difficult as that of his school-days, and where to refuse to partake would have been looked on as an insult. At such times, the Bishop used to remind himself of the episode of the snail. "If I managed a snail for the honour of Ireland," he used to say to himself, "I surely can manage these things for the souls of Nigeria." For the establishment of friendly relations with a chief and so the possibility of the conversion of his subjects, often rested on the acceptance of the native hospitality. Dr Shanahan had as a matter of fact acquired such self-mastery in this that he could take anything offered, no matter how repugnant to his natural taste, with every appearance of enjoyment and pleasure.¹²

The success of Limbour's work at Beauvais was to be its undoing. The new bishop was not at all enamoured of Limbour's ambitious schemes. He wanted something which would contribute more directly to the diocese. Tension built up and as there was no give where Limbour was concerned he had to go. In fact, he went to Rockwell to mount a rescue operation as economic and other factors had precipitated a crisis situation there.¹³ Once again he was to give a repeat performance of his meteoric rise and fall just as he was to do later in Haiti.

Before Fr Limbour left Beauvais he secured the services of a photographer to record for posterity the whole body of students (65 in number) in the junior seminary taken together with the community. It is not a very clearly defined photo and no names have been inscribed in the copy preserved in the central archives of the

Congregation, but there is no mistaking Joseph Shanahan in this his first extant photo. Though far removed from the camera in the top back row, he is conspicuous in that he is head and shoulders over his neighbours and looks unmistakably Irish. This emphasises his age at the time, 17 years, and brings home to us how embarrassed he must have been as he sat in class with those who were much junior to him. But it also explains why in his final year at Beauvais he was entrusted with the duties of "prefect" or student with certain functions in relation to the other students.

Changes at Beauvais

1888, which saw the departure of Père Limbour, saw Br Adelm set off for Ballarat in Australia where he was to join Fr Reffé and his Irish contingent sent to open a secondary school there at the request of Bishop Moore. By coincidence Br Adelm's place was filled by an other Irish brother, Francis Joseph Nesbit, returned from Chandernagor, in India.

The departure of Père Limbour gained only a brief respite for St Joseph's School for Young Clerics. Within a year it had to move out of Beauvais.¹⁴ Luckily the students were given a welcome and a residence near Grenoble by Mgr Armand Fava, a contemporary of Père Jules Leman at Cambrai College and subsequently educated at the Colonial Seminary conducted by the Holy Ghost Fathers in rue Lhomond, Paris.

Among the objects they made sure to bring with them was the beautiful statue of St Joseph presented to them at the foundation of the school by the then bishop of Beauvais. This statue had been at the heart of the school for young and old. Years later, when Shanahan had returned from Nigeria on his first holiday, he called to Susa in Italian Savoy where the apostolic school was once more in exile due this time to the anticlerical government of Combes, he wrote as follows to his father on the back of a postcard with the image of St Joseph and the following caption:

Saint-Joseph couronné à Seyssinet Honoré dans l'exil à Susa

16 May 1906.

Dearest Father,

It was at the foot of this statue of St Joseph that I said my first prayers in France twenty-one years ago, prayers in which your name and Mother's were surely mentioned. The French persecution has driven Saint Joseph from France. Fancy my delight to see the good Saint once again in the heart of the Italian Alps. Needless to say, your name with Mother's, not forgetting Bridie, Dan and all the absent ones, were once more mentioned in prayer before the venerable saint. May his blessing and protection ever be with you all.

On Monday I go to Rome. Don't forget me in the Rosary. I want to obtain very special assistance, which humanly speaking, I won't get; but if you pray hard to St Joseph I am sure all my wishes will be realised - the more so as they are for those I love, at home, and for those other ones equally dear in distant Africa.

Good-bye for the present, with my best love to Mother and all at home. Saint Joseph's blessing on us all, and he is your own saint, Father. Do not forget it. He will be your best friend to the end."

Later he sent a postcard to his mother with the few lines:

Dearest Mother,

Here is Saint Joseph's Chapel in Italy where I said my first Mass in this part of the world. Tell Brigid and Dan I won't forget them when coming from Rome.¹⁵

But that was in 1906. Away back in 1889, when the school at Beauvais had to move out of the shadow of the great cathedral, two students who needed all the help they could find were Francis Vögt and Joseph Shanahan. They were both eighteen years of age; they had done only half of their secondary studies and now they had nowhere to go. Both wanted to join the Spiritans but they had no one to sponsor them at this stage as Beauvais was not a Spiritan juniorate. Francis Vögt was accommodated at a college conducted by the Society at Castelnau-d'Orbieu, near Carcassonne in the south of France. When the Superior General and his secretary, Fr Peter Huvéty, called to Beauvais to finalise negotiations with the bishop about a junior secondary school to be conducted there for the town, Joseph enquired about the possibility of his being accommodated at the juniorate in Blackrock. Fr Huvéty, who had until very recently been president of Blackrock, told him that because of his age and his studies to date he would not fit in with the Irish situation.¹⁶

As the juniorates in Langonnet and Rockwell had been closed that year there was only one option - to write to the director of the juniorate at Cellule stating his case. Here in translation is Shanahan's earliest extant letter dated 12 September 1889:

Reverend Father,

... You will not be surprised to receive a letter from a *clerc* (that is a free student from the apostolic school) when you understand that the V Reverend Superior General himself has intimated to the Superior of Beauvais to have me admitted to the Junior Scholasticate at Cellule.

I am asking then, Father, if you are willing to accept me - an Irishman. I had opted for Blackrock. I renounced this idea when Fr Huvéty remarked that my age - I am eighteen - and our system of studies rendered me unsuited to the French College. It is unnecessary for me to say that I am attracted by the life led by the Congregation. I dare hope that you will receive my request favourably.

Furthermore I will always have the time to help out at Cellule and I will not always have the time to render here the services that might be considered useful.

Be pleased to receive, dear Reverend Father, my gratitude in advance and my respectful and affectionate good wishes.

Joseph I Shanahan, CS

Fr Edward Pallier, secretary of the Archconfraternity of St Joseph, wrote a note at the end of Joseph Shanahan's letter:

I would have wished to have written to you myself on behalf of Father Superior but I have not the time and so have authorised Joseph Shanahan to set out for you the object of his request. You will gain by having him: he was the prefect of the students in the apostolic school here.

E V Pallier.¹⁷

This is the earliest letter extant from Joseph Shanahan. One notices that he signs himself Joseph I Shanahan. It is presumed that the I stands for Ignatius but Shanahan uses this name only once again, namely in his next letter, written in 1890. The name Ignatius never appears in official versions of Shanahan's name. It was probably the name Shanahan took at Confirmation. This first extant letter was written to the director of the Juniorate at Cellule, Fr Victor Bertsch. One can understand then why, forty years later, when Shanahan lists the people he must thank under God for helping him along the way, he singles out Fr Bertsch for special mention: "... in receiving me into the Congregation - Fr Bertsch, at Cellule."

Apropos of Shanahan's declared preference for being placed at Blackrock College once he had to leave Beauvais in 1889 and the negative response given to his request by Fr Huvéty, a few clarifications are in order. Fr Huvéty had been superior at Blackrock from 1880 to early 1889 and though he had been in France for some months on sick leave he was still officially superior of Blackrock until Fr Jules Botrel was appointed to succeed him in late August 1889. In the meantime Fr Huvéty had been acting as assistant to the Superior General, Fr Emonet, who, incidentally, had taught him as a secondary student in Martinique. They both came to Beauvais to negotiate the new deal regarding the College there. It was natural that he would have dealt with Shanahan's application to be allowed to go to Blackrock, and the fact that he gave a negative reply without informing anyone in Blackrock was perfectly in order. An obvious reason why Joseph asked to be sent to Blackrock was that his brother Patrick had been accepted in the juniorate there the previous year. Br Adelm, no doubt, had arranged for that while he was in Ireland preparing to travel to Ballarat with Fr Reffé and his team. Fr Huvéty would have met Patrick there before he had left for France and he would have been aware of his link with Br Adelm whom he had known at Rockwell and at Blackrock.

Some months later Fr Huvéty, as first assistant to the Superior General, would be dealing with the reports on the juniorate at Blackrock where Patrick Shanahan was credited with the unfavourable notes '*entêté*' and '*gamin*' (headstrong and behaving in an undisciplined manner). That report brought a warning for Patrick that if he did not mend his ways he would be parting company with the juniorate. In fact, he was told to leave in October 1891 as being unsuitable for the priesthood.¹⁸

The director, incidentally, in the Blackrock juniorate at that time was Fr John Neville, the future bishop, and his use of the term '*gamin*' to describe Patrick Shanahan has an ironic flavour in that the same epithet had been applied to himself as a student in a poem published in the *French College Literary Journal* in 1873!

Cellule

Cellule is situated in the Auvergne region. The nearest railway town is Riom and the nearest large town is Clermont. The Spiritans had been running a school there since 1856. At first they were invited to take charge of an orphanage. That was the first attempt by the Society at education of students at a secondary level than those studying for the priesthood. When the Falloux Laws of 1850 had facilitated the re-opening of private secondary schools, a juniorate for the Society and a seminary college were gradually developed at Cellule.¹⁹ A similar institution was launched at Langonnet in Brittany (1857). A *Réglement Provisoire* covering all aspects of the French system of school life was drawn up by the authorities in the Congregation to serve as the approved guideline for these and other schools to be conducted by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit at home and abroad. A copy of this document (Ms) was supplied early on to Père Leman to be followed in the French College, Blackrock. Later a more elaborate version of this *Réglement* was published at Cellule in a booklet running into 140 pages.²⁰ This comprehensive guide to all aspects of school life gives us a good picture of what life must have been like at Cellule in Shanahan's time, and indeed in most *Petit Séminaires* throughout France. Leman was to find that Irish boys did not take as easily to all aspects of the French system as his French superiors would have wished.

One of Père Leman's former students in the senior scholasticate, Fr Hubert, who was the mainspring of Cellule for over thirty years, devised the plan of arranging an exchange of students between the Irish and French juniorates. It was to be a one

way traffic: several students came from Cellule to Ireland. One of these, Jean Desnier, who had been a student, prefect and priest at Blackrock, was later to be Shanahan's professor of Moral Theology in the senior scholasticate in Rockwell, 1898-1900.²¹ The fact that it was not found feasible to send even one Irish junior scholastic to Cellule over the years underlines the anomalous position in which Shanahan was to find himself for the next five years apart entirely from his advanced age for secondary education.

There were some surprises in store for Joseph on the staff at Cellule. The Bursar, Fr George Ott, had but recently returned from Rockwell where he had been bursar from 1883 to 1889. He had served with Fr Limbour for his final year in Rockwell; so perhaps Joseph may have found that they had something in common to speak about.²² About Rockwell itself Joseph would have had no experience at this stage. More surprising was the discovery that one of his teachers, Fr Joseph Spielmann, had been director of the Juniorate at Blackrock from 1870 to 1880. It was he in fact who had sent Joseph's uncle, Patrick Walsh (Br Adelm) to the brothers' novitiate in Rockwell in 1875, and he and Br Adelm had both spent the year 1879-80 at Blackrock.²³

During the period that Fr Limbour was Director of the Juniorate he had had to deal with a very remarkable student, Richard Pennefather. Richard died unexpectedly at the end of his course and Fr Spielmann decided to publish his life story under the ambitious title: *A New Model for Youth*. One can take it for granted that Fr Spielmann would have lent a copy of this book to Joseph as there would have been very few English works in their library at Cellule. Apart from the Pennefathers being of Tipperary stock, Joseph could not but have been impressed by the mature grasp of spirituality shown by Richard, and he would doubtless have heard Fr Gerald Griffin speak about him at Beauvais as Gerald and Richard had been classmates at Blackrock. Finally, the teacher of English at Cellule just before Joseph arrived there was a man named Joseph Hanrahan. A native of Ardfinnan, Co. Tipperary, he had come to Chevilly from All Hallows in 1886. Ordained deacon in 1889 he had been sent to Cellule for a year as professor of English but by the end of the school year he had decided to leave the Congregation and serve instead in the diocese of New Orleans.²⁴

All the students with whom Joseph Shanahan had to live for the next five years were French-speaking. The group he belonged to, the Junior scholastics, numbered 55. There were others trying to get in there but they had to be turned away because 'they had no Latin and no money', as we are told in a report in the *Bulletin Général*. (XV 87-9; XVI 138ff) There were 140 seminarians or students who hoped to go on for the priesthood later, either for the diocese or for religious orders. With these Joseph would have had little contact apart from class hours. There were, as well, the orphans and the postulant Brothers - each group in their separate quarters. With these Joseph would normally have had no contact.

The scholastics or aspirants for the Congregation were divided into two groups: the 'postulants' and the 'titulars' or those allowed to wear the religious habit or soutane. To qualify for the soutane one had to be at least sixteen years of age, have been in the community for over one year, and have passed the required tests as to studies and conduct. For his first year at Cellule we find him getting the top mark for Conduct, Studies and Health. In the "Observation" column he is just noted for the first term as 'Former prefect of clerics at Beauvais' and for the second term he marked as 'good in all respects'.²⁵

There were no objections when Joseph applied for the soutane, 22 May 1890. The letter of application, written in French, is addressed to the Superior General and

follows the stereotyped form for such an application, though one can sense a personal touch:

Very Reverend and dear Father,

After much reflection, consultation and earnest prayer, I now take the liberty to beg of your paternal goodness, the favour of being clothed in the habit of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, being convinced that God calls me to the priestly and religious life. If my unworthiness makes me hesitate before taking such an important step, the favourable reception which you will surely give to my request, encourages me to abandon myself to the care of the father of that holy Institute which attracts me so much.

Born in 1871, in Gortnalaura, a little village in County Tipperary, Ireland, I have always had the desire to consecrate myself to God; knowing the object and works of the Congregation, I went to Beauvais in 1886, where my vocation was confirmed. Then at the end of September 1889, having been sent to the Junior Scholasticate at Cellule, I had the consolation of being encouraged in my noble intention, and so I can implore you to grant me the favour of being admitted to the number of children whom you cherish with so much care and affection.

I am blessed in still having my parents, who seeing my pronounced attraction towards the religious life, far from turning me from so holy an enterprise have welcomed this holy call from God to the best of their ability.²⁶

One presumes that the special retreat preceding this ‘oblation’ ceremony was given by their director Fr Victor Bertsch, about whom there is little information available as there was no obituary published when he died in 1903 aged 62. The names of the six students received into the Congregation at that ceremony on 29 June 1890 were published in the *Bulletin Général* and this is the first time that the name Joseph Shanahan appeared in print.²⁷ Significantly he took as his name in religion ‘Francis Xavier’ after the great Jesuit missionary. One of the six, Charles Bourqui, well known later to the Irish scholastics who studied at Fribourg, liked to recall Shanahan having tried to prompt him at an oral English examination by giving a warning cough whenever he made a mistake!

The school retreat for 1890 was conducted by Fr Edward Reffé who had just returned ill from Ballarat, Australia.²⁸ There is no record of the students’ reaction to his conferences but a retreat he preached at Blackrock, when called on suddenly to replace the visiting preacher, was so impressive that it was remembered by some for a life-time. One can presume that Joseph made a point of meeting Fr Reffé as he had been the superior of the community in Australia where Br Adelm was a member. One can also imagine how shocked they were at Cellule when exactly twelve months later they heard that Fr Reffé had died suddenly just as he was about to take over direction of the Archconfraternity of St Joseph at Beauvais. In the notes for 1890 Shanahan is once more given No.1 - i.e. the highest rating for Conduct, studies and health, but in the Observations it is said “Slipped somewhat but improved after the retreat.” For 1891 the comment is: “Remains the same apart for minor changes of standard.” For 1891- 1st term he gets only a 2 for Studies and Health with the comment “He fights against his inconstancy.” And for the final term we have this intriguing comment: “An Irishman with the qualities and some of the defects of his race.” The final comment given by Fr Meistermann for 1892-3 reads: “Devoted - a little inconstant.”²⁹ One would wish for a further explanation from Fr Meistermann of his comments, in particular his concept of the typical Irishman, especially as Joseph Shanahan was the

only Irish student he would have met, apart that is from the Irish senior scholastics he had known at Chevilly.

One aspect of the religious life at Cellule that would have specially appealed to Joseph was that St Joseph was again patron of the school and that devotion to him was fostered. A play in his honour composed by a member of the staff was staged by the students. It seems to have happened quite regularly that they composed their own stage productions. Other big occasions were celebrated in style, especially Prize Day to which the past students were regularly invited. These included 120 priests on one occasion. The bishop of Clermont, with an eye probably to future vocations, presided at Prize Day as he did on several other occasions during the school year. One memorable occasion ended up with an emotional incident. When Bishop Boyer was promoted to being the Archbishop of Lyons he called to say farewell and invited Mgr Le Roy CSSp, who had spent two years on the staff at Cellule and was now home from the missions, to join with him. At the end of his farewell speech he removed his episcopal ring and presenting it to Mgr Le Roy he asked him to remember him when he was '*là-bas sur la terre d'Afrique*'.³⁰

The students were not allowed to forget the missions. And one can imagine what daily conferences they received from the man appointed as their director in 1893 in succession to Fr Bertsch, namely, Fr Hyacinthe Jalabert, future bishop of Senegal, who was to perish in 1920 with eighteen of his fellow missionaries in the shipwreck of the *SS Afrique*. In 1893 Fr Jalabert was home ill from Cayenne, French Guiana, when he was asked to deputise as director during Shanahan's final year at Cellule.

An extant group photo of the community shows, beside Jalabert, several others who are of interest to our story: Fr Meistermann, whom Joseph was to have as his director in the senior scholasticate at Rockwell; Fr Thierry, who was professor of Philosophy Class and was later to supervise Shanahan's theological studies when away from the scholasticate at Merville College; Fr Jean-Baptiste Descours, who had some years earlier taught at Blackrock. Finally, one missionary who was specially welcomed by older members of the community was Fr Clement Hubert home from Angola. Previous to his appointment to Angola he had devoted 32 years of his life to the school at Cellule.

Cellule college, as we have seen, had its own system of studies, its own syllabus and internal examinations. It ignored the public examinations for *Baccalauréat ès Lettres* and the *B. ès Sciences* conducted under the auspices of the *Université* through the various regional faculties. It was considered by authorities in the Congregation that such examinations would have a disturbing influence on the students for the priesthood. The same argument had been used to question the advisability of the scholastics at Blackrock taking part in public examinations connected with the Catholic University, the Intermediate system, and later with the Royal University. Notable among those who expressed such views in Ireland were Fr Huvéty and Fr Spielmann. The threat to their numbers at Cellule from other academies and junior seminaries in the region forced them to abandon this attitude. The numbers in the seminary-college had dropped from 137 to 110. The year Joseph arrived a handful of senior students were entered for the *Baccalauréat* with satisfactory results. The number was increased the next year as they had given due prominence to the teaching of science and philosophy. The news of their success travelled abroad with the hoped-for result: numbers climbed up from 110 (paying) students in 1890-91 to 140 the following year and by 1894, Shanahan's final year, the number had reached 160.³¹

Shanahan himself was to be involved in this academic battle for the survival of

the school. In 1894 he sat successfully for the 'Bachot' as the students called it. A splendid photo taken that year of this 'Bachot' group shows Shanahan with his unmistakable contours, but minus the Shanahan beard. He was now being groomed to sit for the *Baccalauréat ès Sciences* and he seems to have had a special interest in certain aspects of science which he was to retain all his life. A scholastic in Fribourg in later years recalls him as saying that he had just read with some interest a semi-scientific work on bees by Maeterlinck. He laughed heartily when reminded that the book had been put on the Index! But in 1894 he did not find the study of science a laughing matter. In fact, it had reduced him almost to tears as we learn from the letter he wrote at the time asking if it were possible to have him excused from facing the third year of intense studies required for the *B.è.s.Sc.*.

Before dealing with that letter and its consequences we refer to a notebook that Shanahan kept over the years which contains prose and poetry which he transcribed either for the pleasure they gave him or as part of his course of studies. By far the longest work in this notebook is a mini-treatise entitled *Le Beau!* The nature of Beauty. This scientific analysis of the concept and of the concrete expressions of The Beautiful with all its subdivisions has the hall-marks of a schoolroom task. Whether he was dealing with the matter as a student or as a teacher we have no clue from the text of over 50 tightly-packed pages. If it belongs to this period of Shanahan's studies one is not then surprised at the letter that he wrote to the Assistant Superior General, Fr Peter Huvéty. It was Fr Huvéty, incidentally, who five years previously had vetoed his application to be sent to Blackrock on the closure of the Apostolic School at Beauvais.

5 August 1894.

Dear Reverend Father,

I have just passed the second part of the *Baccalauréat* and was thinking of going to the Senior Scholasticate at the beginning of the academic year. But now Fr Superior (Fr Spielmann) has told me and my confrère, Mr Hurst, that it is his opinion that we should do the *Baccalauréat ès Sciences*. For one who owes so much to the Congregation, and in particular to the Junior Scholasticate at St Saviour's, to the Superiors and Directors who are in charge, would only be a very small sign of my sincere love for the Congregation and its members that I should be ready to submit to their least desires.

Nevertheless VR Father, I beg you to consider certain objections, which I believe I am permitted to make to Fr Superior's request.

I am already in my 24th year. This means that if I delay another year, I shall not have the happiness of being a priest or professed member of the Congregation until the very advanced age of thirty years!

Now, Very Reverend Father, it is unnecessary for me, I believe, to tell you with what ardour I desire that thrice happy day when I may join that holy phalanx which combats and dies out there in Africa for the holiest and most sacred of all causes.

I am now eight years studying and have come to find life in the Junior Scholasticate trying - not that life there leaves anything to be desired - rather the contrary; but because I find myself among men, who for the most part are much younger than I am. Also I am now eight years without being on holidays in Ireland, my native country. I shall be very glad, Father, if you can allow me to go immediately to the Senior Scholasticate, as I feel somewhat tired as a result of the last two years' preparation for the 1st and 2nd parts of the *Baccalauréat*. Studying in a language which is not my own and at such an

advanced age, I can tell you I am experiencing serious difficulties and at times anxiety.

Such, Reverend Father, are the most serious objections which I beg you to kindly consider with regard to the *Baccalaureat ès Sciences*.

However, if you see fit not to allow me to go to the Senior Scholasticate I shall do my best as in the past to endeavour to satisfy the least desires of my Superiors. In doing their will, I shall be sure of doing that of God. It seems to me that should be the motto of every scholastic and religious.

I shall not speak to you, Father, of my aptitudes for the Sciences. Reverend Fr Thierry our dear, regretted Professor of Philosophy, can give you all the details you may require. No one can tell better than he what I am capable of and what I am not capable of.

Hoping dear Reverend Father that my request will be favourably received yet submitting myself with all my heart to a contrary decision,

I remain,

Yours obediently and respectfully in the S.Sp.,
Joseph I Shanahan, Schol. Tit.³²

One may wonder whether Fr Spielmann's plans for Shanahan and Hurst had more to do with the interests of the school than with improving their liberal education. It is ironic that when he had been director of the Juniorate at Blackrock he opposed Fr Reffé in his plans to subordinate the grading of scholastics to the interests of the school in the public examinations. Fr Huvétys views had not changed: he now overruled Fr Spielmann and allowed Shanahan and Hurst to go to the senior scholasticate. Fr Isidore Hurst was to get to the missions ahead of Shanahan, but only to die in Senegal in 1900 aged but 27.

As Joseph Shanahan says good-bye to Cellule, where he had spent those long five years without a break, we take a brief look ahead at the future development of that community. In spite of Fr Spielmann's best endeavours the school was eventually to close due to external circumstances, namely the anti-clerical decrees of the ex-seminarian, Emile Combès, Président du Conseil (1902-1905). Cellule was held in trust for the Congregation by 'secularised' Spiritans and friends sympathetic to the Congregation. An apostolic school was conducted there for some years. Later, because of its remote situation, the novitiate of the French province was located there. In the 1960s it finally passed from the possession of the Congregation. The present writer visited it the previous year and rescued the group photos in which Shanahan appears. It was interesting to discover that the photographer, M David of Paris, was the same man who had taken the group photos at Blackrock and Rockwell from 1883 to 1903 - the year Cellule ceased to be a seminary-college.

We are fortunate that there are extant records of the assessment of students, albeit expressed in rather brief comments. First there are the one-word replies to the official list of questions to be answered for the guidance of the directors of the next stage of the formation assembly-line, as it were. Opposite the words Health, Temperament, Character, Practical Judgement, Gravity, Modesty, Order, Cleanliness, Work, Application, Regularity, etc we find the word 'Good' in each case. In reply to the question about 'Capacity' we find Shanahan rated as 'Average', and when it came to 'Special Aptitudes', we find him credited with a blank space as if the director did not imagine him excelling in any particular sphere! And yet, as regards his relations with the superiors he is given the note 'Excellent'. To the unusual question: 'Is he

detached from his family?’ the reply is an unequivocal ‘Yes’. The context of that question probably supplied the following query: ‘His vocation to the ecclesiastical and religious life?’ The answer is brief but telling, namely, the French word ‘Certain’.

So at this stage Shanahan emerges as being solid all round, of average ability, but with no special aptitudes. Allowing for the difficulty some Frenchmen had in relating to the Irish temperament and mindful of the universal difficulty of assessing any young man without the gift of hindsight, it can still be said that these comments tell us as much about Shanahan’s directors as about himself.

It is not clear who penned the above comments in the official reports but we are fortunate in having an added, significant and revealing vignette of Shanahan from his final director, Fr Hyacinth Jalabert, future bishop of Senegal, who acted as director of the juniorate while recuperating from the rigours of the climate and life in French Guiana. He wrote about Joseph as follows:

‘A good young man, serious minded and full of respect for his directors. Simple and straightforward in his relations with all. He knows how to distance himself from all that might have an adverse influence on him.’³³

Shanahan and Jalabert were later to get to know one another better as heads of vast mission territories in West Africa. Tragically as Shanahan was being raised to the episcopate in 1920, the memory of the sinking of the *L'Afrique* with Bishop Jalabert and his eighteen missionaries was still so recent and well-known that it formed the backdrop to Shanahan’s eloquent appeal to the students at Maynooth College to come to the aid of the few missionaries already in the field in Africa.

Senior Seminarian

(a) Langonnet, Brittany

The senior house of studies or senior scholasticate was in principle located at Chevilly in the southern suburbs of Paris. Because of the upheavals and destruction caused by the armed conflicts of 1870-71 the scholasticate was transferred temporarily to Langonnet, Brittany. When Chevilly was rebuilt and ready for the increased numbers at the end of the 1870s, all moved back there again. However, by 1889, as Chevilly became too cramped for the total numbers from the various Provinces of the Congregation, it was decided to move part of the student body back to Langonnet once more, namely those starting Philosophy or their first year of Theology. It was to Langonnet then that Joseph set out in autumn 1894.

The Abbey of Langonnet, to give it its full title, was formerly a Cistercian abbey founded during the life-time of St Bernard. Part of the original chapter house still stands but the main portion of the abbey was rebuilt in the eighteenth century. Chiselled on one of the blocks of masonry are the ambitious words: “We build for eternity”. During the French Revolution the abbey was suppressed and the property appropriated to serve as a stud for the Imperial cavalry. Its sister abbey in Brittany, the original *Mont Melleray*, reopened for some years but after the problems created by the 1830 Revolution the monks, among whom many were Irish, migrated to Ireland. Langonnet Abbey was purchased from the state by the Spiritans in 1857 to cater for several works committed to the Congregation. Eventually, it housed the main training centre for the Brothers, an orphanage, a juniorate, a college, and part of the Colonial Seminary conducted by the Congregation at Paris. Each of these categories had its own separate enclosure, all minutely mapped out by Fr Frederick Le Vavasseur and the Superior General, Fr Schwindenhammer.³⁴

It was from this community that many of the priests and brothers came to start

houses in Ireland, and Langonnet was to serve as the model which they were expected to imitate. It was to Langonnet also that the first Irish clerical students and postulant brothers were sent. They suffered something of a culture shock in the process, partly due to their lack of French, the unaccustomed régime and the feeling of sheer isolation. In Langonnet one feels isolated even from France, and that was one of the reasons that the managers of the stud farm were anxious to dispose of it.

There was one pleasant surprise in store for Joseph Shanahan when he reached Langonnet. The man in charge, albeit for a few months only, was an Irishman, Fr John Joseph O'Gorman, the future bishop of Sierra Leone and Shanahan's life-long friend.

One factor which may have united these two in spite of the five years' difference in their ages was that, like Shanahan, Fr O'Gorman had been sent to France to complete his secondary studies when he had fallen ill at Blackrock, and he had been in France since 1883.³⁵ But Joseph was not to have the pleasure of having him as his professor. Fr O'Gorman was professor of dogmatic theology and Joseph was there to do his philosophy course as the so-called 'philosophy' year which he had done at Cellule had more to do with science and mathematics and perhaps aesthetics than with scholastic philosophy.

The professor of philosophy and sub-director of the scholasticate was Fr Charles Bernard. He had been a student in Cambrai college, Père Leman's alma mater, and his uncle, who was VG for the diocese of Cambrai, had been in close contact with Fr Libermann, and was also a colleague of Fr Alexander Monnet who had abdicated as Superior General in favour of Fr Libermann in 1848. The superior at Langonnet for 1894-5 was none other than Fr Libermann's nephew, Fr Francis Xavier Libermann.³⁶ He had previously been director of the senior scholasticate in Langonnet in the seventies when he was blamed by Père Leman for not being very sympathetic to the Irish scholastics. In the meantime, Fr Libermann had been to Ireland on two occasions and had learned English; so he was in a better position to relate to things Irish.

There were other reminders of the Venerable Libermann at Langonnet. His elder brother, Dr Samson, who had influenced some members of the Libermann family to enter the Catholic church, had joined the Langonnet community as an *agrégé*. His grave is still the central piece of the community cemetery. The statue of Our Lady of Victories in the niche over the high altar had come from Notre Dame du Gard where it had been placed by Fr Libermann, and the crown had later been donated by Fr Libermann's friend, Fr Desgennettes, when Pius IX had presented a new crown for the statue at the original shrine in Paris. Had Joseph Shanahan then known the college chapel at Blackrock, he would have immediately recognised the style as did the other Irish students. It was a replica of what Br Eugéne Devenna had executed in other chapels throughout the Congregation, at rue Lhomond, Cellule, Blackrock, etc.

The main chapel at Langonnet was the conventional church used by the Cistercians, re-consecrated after it had been cleared of horses and hay. It was adorned over the years by the Brothers who were learning the art of working with wood, stucco and iron. This little-used church still stands as a monument to their skill and devotion. Though it was not a parish church the local people came to join in the ceremonial celebration of big feast days. Such celebrations were welcomed to enliven the palpable stillness where nature still seems bent on imposing monastic silence as in the days of the monks. An occasion seized on by his students but not enthused about by the person involved was the silver jubilee of Fr Bernard's ordination to the

priesthood. As we are told that the Philosophers did all the organising on this occasion we can be sure that Joseph Shanahan was to the fore, being one of the most senior members.

Because it was so difficult of access in the days before motor cars, they did not have many visitors. One visit that meant a lot to Joseph, we can be sure, was that of Fr Limbour, his former director and benefactor at Beauvais. He had returned from his term as superior in Rockwell and was en route to Haiti to revitalise another ailing institution. As a relaxation he was preaching a number of retreats and he is mentioned as having given one of his inimitable inspiring conferences to the students.

There were to be 80 students starting off that academic year but ten Frenchmen had to report for military service. This would be the first time that Joseph would have had the company of his own compatriots. Unfortunately, their names are not to hand. Fr F X Libermann preached the eight-day retreat as they started the year. In the absence of details from the community journal we are without any matter of note till January 1895 when twenty of their number departed for Chevilly. The reason for the unexpected change of plans was the obligation for clerical students from that time to report for military service. This innovation had become a matter for serious worry. The archbishop of Paris had negotiated a temporary reprieve for those already pursuing their senior studies, provided they were doing so within the archbishop's jurisdiction. This was the signal for the end of the senior house of studies at Langonnet till World War I forced a retreat from the Paris area once again. Among the students to move to the relative safety of Langonnet on that occasion were the last batch of Irish students to do their theology in France, amongst them Fr James Mellet of Nigeria fame.

No letters from Shanahan have survived from Langonnet. There was no need for any official letters at this period once all was going well. No doubt official 'notes' were again sent to headquarters about each student, but these have not been traced. There were not many places of interest for the students to visit in the area during their group promenades, but one can well imagine that at least the Irish made a trip to the ancient church dedicated to the Irish saint who has given a word to the French language namely, St Fiacre. There they would have admired the elaborate and beautifully carved rood-screen which is highlighted for tourists visiting the region today. In this connection it is worth mentioning that Shanahan's well-known love of things Irish, which influenced his choice of the shamrock as one of the symbols in his episcopal crest, may well have been deepened by his years in exile.

With that sense of occasion beloved of the French they chose the 15 August, the Feast of the Assumption, to celebrate solemnly their final day at Langonnet. Next morning at dawn they all gathered around the Superior, Fr F X. Libermann, in the inner quadrangle in front of the statue of Our Lady to sing the *Ave Maris Stella* with full voice. Then they set off in the 'voitures' and 'fiacres' while the great chapel bell tolled their departure. The 'Sisters of Wisdom', founded by St Grignion de Montfort, had kindly prepared a good meal for them at Quimperlé where they boarded the train for the long journey to Paris, stopping overnight at a seminary in Tours³⁷

Langonnet reverted to being a juniorate till after World War II. Today it is the main home for the retired members of the Congregation in France, a haven of peace, prayer and welcome for the traveller that it had been in the old days when it acted as a hostel for the pilgrims en route to Compostella in Spain. Hence the name Tourner Bride or Bridle Stop which is still given to part of the complex.

(b) Chevilly

When the Langonnet contingent arrived at Chevilly there were 150 students to be housed there. The new influx called for much restructuring, especially as they had to be divided into three 'houses' for most of their daily routine. There were the 'Philosophers' under their director and professor Fr Bernard. The first year Theology students were a separate section from the second cycle composed of 2nd and 3rd year divines. Fourth year divines - ordination and novitiate year- were catered for at another community at Grignon, Orly.³⁸

The superior of the whole community at Chevilly was again Fr. F X Libermann, and the principal director was Fr Henri Vanhaecke (Van Haecke) of whom more anon. Fr O'Gorman, considered by many as the most brilliant mind in the Congregation, was by then professor of dogmatic theology for the senior group; so he would have had little contact with Joseph Shanahan, at least for studies. His professor of dogma for his first year was to be Fr Joseph Décailliet.

Fr Décailliet (1865-1927) was Swiss-born.³⁹ Having studied at St Maurice he tried the novitiate at Grand Chartreuse but was in time advised to apply for acceptance at Chevilly. When letting the Superior General know of his personal preferences after ordination he said that, much as he admired the heroic lives of the missionaries, he personally would find more fulfilment in a life of study. He was duly appointed to the senior scholasticate where he proved to be a good, methodical, conscientious teacher, but his students found it difficult to relate to him because of his aloof manner at the beginning of his life as professor. Later he was to become a successful director of the international house of studies which the Congregation opened in Fribourg where the students followed their courses at the university.

It was not all academic education at Chevilly. Their proximity to Paris meant that they had plenty of scope for educational and devotional outings. The first target for all newcomers would be the shrine of Our Lady of Victories because of its close associations with the Venerable Libermann and the origins of his foundation, The Society of the Holy Heart of Mary. We find mention of groups going to visit Notre Dame, Montmartre etc., and on the secular side there were educational trips to Versailles and Vincennes. Such outings were of course very controlled and had to be fitted into the 'free days'.

The dominant aspect of life at Chevilly, apart from study, was the liturgy. They had a great tradition to uphold as the classical manual of liturgical ceremonies was being edited from there over the years since the Venerable Libermann had encouraged Fr Leon Levavasseur to compile his first manual. The current editor of the manual, Fr Stercky, was professor of Liturgy. And, due again to the relative ease with which visitors could get to Chevilly, they had no shortage of important ecclesiastics calling, who were available to add solemnity to the religious offices.

One visitor singled out for special mention is M. L'Abbé Lemire, a deputy in the national parliament. Apart from the fact that he was a brother of Fr Achille, who had served at Blackrock, Rockwell, Ballarat and Trinidad, L'Abbé was a close friend of the director of the scholasticate, Fr Vanhaecke. Their friendship began when they were at school together at Hazebrook. So when L'Abbé Lemire was invited by the Pope to visit Rome he took Fr Vanhaecke with him as chaplain. When Pope Leo XIII was asked during their private audience for some words of advice to a director of a senior seminary he told Vanhaecke that he must prepare his young men well to face a world that was hostile to the Catholic church. He then went on to speak of the

qualities necessary for a missionary going to Guinea in particular.⁴⁰ These words were later emphasised by Vanhaecke when speaking to his students as they reinforced his own convictions.

Shanahan does not list Fr Vanhaecke in his special list of people for whom he thanks the Lord at the close of his spiritual diary- but from his extant letters it is obvious that he was very close to him and highly valued his direction, as did many others. Fr Vanhaecke, a native of the north of France, had graduated at Douai and did his senior studies at Cambrai. Influenced to join the Congregation by Fr Antoine Horner's lectures on the missions in East Africa, he was disappointed that after his ordination he was posted to Merville College near his own native place where he was to spend six years. His next appointment was to take charge of a college in Martinique. His success in both these functions made him an obvious choice to be put in charge of the senior scholasticate when the director, Fr Jean-Marie Grizard, was moved to the Generalate administration.

Van Haecke stamped his own seal on the scholasticate from the word go. A man of austerity, discipline and high ideals, he was insistent on getting others to live up to these standards, professors as well as students.

Joseph Shanahan must have relished life in Chevilly where he could get on with his studies in the company of men of his own age group and with some from his own country, many of them conspicuous by a maturity forged from several years of teaching and prefecting. Then, came Christmas 1895, out of the blue he was called on by Fr Vanhaecke to make what must have been for him quite a sacrifice: he was to be sent as a prefect to Merville College.⁴¹

Merville College, in which Vanhaecke was especially interested, both because of the years he had spent there and because it was his own native place, appealed to him for a replacement for their professor of English, who had just died. The man in question was none other than Fr Joseph Lutz, the founder of the mission being conducted by the Congregation in southern Nigeria. Broken in health he had returned to France and while recuperating he had volunteered to replace someone as English teacher.

Merville depended for its survival on its showing in the public examinations and because of its proximity to England, English was a vital subject in that region. Not knowing what the future had in store, namely that he would in ten years time be taking over from Lutz's successor, Fr Lejeune, Joseph Shanahan had for the moment to concentrate on survival in the face of more immediate hazards. For a non-Frenchman to face for the first time a class of French students would be no picnic at any time, but to come in on the scene in the middle of the school year was bound to be an extra challenge. Vanhaecke knew his mettle and gave him some sound advice; but he also reminded him that if he wanted to have this year counted as a year of his seminary course he would have to keep up the course of studies mapped out by his professor, Fr Joseph Décaillet.

(c) Merville

Merville College had been founded by a wealthy charitable lady without having any clear plan as to the type of school she wanted. It was only when Fr Vanhaecke was sent there as director in 1877 that the school was given a purpose and organisation. He worked hard to develop it as a college and juniorate.⁴² He insisted that his teachers sit for a qualifying examination and gradually they entered the senior students for the baccalauréat. As there were already several schools of a similar sort in the region around Armentières, people were going to judge this new school by its

performance. Under Vanhaecke it did very well indeed, but in his absence matters had not continued on that course. So it was made clear to Joseph Shanahan that he must give of his best.

Little of substance about life in the school is to be found in the report published in the *Bulletin Général*,⁴³ but we are fortunate that the French penchant for conserving archives has ensured that some valuable letters from Shanahan to Fr Vanhaecke his director in the senior scholasticate have survived. These letters not merely give a picture of the type of life he was experiencing but also give us an insight into his inner self. It is obvious that he had a good relationship with his director, speaking to him as man to man in a manner not often found in such communications between a scholastic and his director. Already we sense Shanahan's sound common sense, his frankness and his pursuit of high standards. These letters speak for themselves.

There were four other prefects at Merville at the time. Fr Thierry, who is mentioned as supervising their study of theology, is the priest whom Shanahan had known already in Cellule and mentioned in his letter as his professor for *philosophie* or highest grade in the French secondary schools. The places in locality and the people mentioned in these letters were known to Fr Vanhaecke. The changes in the senior scholasticate referred to in the final letter will become clear later.

I have now spent a fortnight at *N.D d'Espérance* (Our Lady of Hope) and in spite of that I am still feeling a bit lost. It is no longer Chevilly with the regularity of the scholasticate and the faces of the Fathers and companions so well-known and for so long. I shall only be away for some months and yet how much it is costing me. But Father, I hasten to add that I am very happy all the same. One could not ask for better than this fine community at Merville, where one finds among other blessings, that family spirit of which you spoke to me when I was leaving. Then it is God's will that I should be here; consequently my position viewed with even a little spirit of faith could not be better. I always thought I was very attached to the Congregation but now - I don't know why - I am still more so. And it will always be a happiness for me to be able to accept the little sacrifices which the Congregation can ask of me - this beloved Congregation to which I owe so much.

To return to Merville, they had some difficulty with the Inspector. They had to ask his permission to allow me to teach English. The reply did not come for a week - during which time I lived as a hermit. Finally he wrote last Monday to say I could remain here as a teacher until Easter on condition that I should take certain steps to become naturalised. I leave all to the care of Divine Providence.

I have eight hours of English in the week with one and a half hours of History and Geography with the third Years without mentioning the one hour's grind I give to Father Lithy, who is to replace me next year. As you see Father, I have sufficient time for my Theology. With regard to Spiritual exercises, I am regular in attending those of the community. For the past two days I have done my hour of Spiritual reading. Here in front of me is a huge volume of Rodriguez which will suffice until the end of the year (at least for ascetical reading). My meditations! They are not going too badly. In the beginning it was always the same story. It would not be easy to say what progress I made in the three quarters of an hour! We do not fail in charity at recreation. In that respect there is nothing to fear, Rev Father Thierry being always with us. However, St Thomas and Aristotle are not always the subject

of conversation. We amuse ourselves as best we can; each one contributes his share so that everything goes excellently.

With the help of your good prayers and the protection of the Blessed Virgin, all will thus go well until the end of the academic year,
Your child in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

J Shanahan.⁴⁴

I March 1896.

Dear Father,

I thank you for the good advice that you have so kindly given me. If I can follow it, I am convinced that the year will pass very well with the correct balance between my spiritual life and the accomplishment of my work. Up to now I have attended all the Exercises of the community regularly. Immediately after breakfast and at 10 o'clock I do a quarter of an hour's Spiritual Reading (Rodriguez and St Paul); at one o'clock I say the Rosary and at four o'clock I read the subject of meditation. This latter point is not always observed very faithfully. I do not like the author. It is a real mortification for me to read him for ten minutes. I do not find a single meditation proper to the season in this book. But I shall continue to read it were it only as a mortification - and I promise you Father to be more faithful to it in future. I receive the weekly communions regularly and go to confession every Saturday. The many little troubles, (inevitable for one who is teaching and especially when it is for the first time) make one realise the need of seeking consolation from some faithful friend. That friend, Father, is the good Jesus. I see that it is He alone Who can understand the thousand nothings from which we can suffer at each moment; a few minutes spent with Him and everything is settled; one goes away from Him content.

Things go fairly well in the various English classes with the exception of the third Form - there my duty is one of supervision. The cause of my trouble is that a few little rascals come there just to amuse themselves. Yesterday I put one of them out of the class. Fr Superior told me not to take him back again. Things will go better from this on. I continue to take private lessons in Theology twice a week. I should be able to finish it before the end of the year. My relations with both the Fathers and my confreres are always excellent. We chat away together during our free time but I do not think that it is overdone. I forgot to tell you that I have not made the Stations of the Cross. The Stations have been removed from the big Chapel which is being painted. They have just been put up in the small chapel. I try to remain faithful to this holy exercise at least three times a week, especially during Lent. I am fasting during Lent. I find it a little hard.

But robust health like mine, far from suffering harm, benefits from it. Finally Father, Divine Providence has done well in sending me to this house. If one does not become more holy, at least one can see clearly what to do in order to become a useful member of our dear Congregation. Then certain faults previously unknown become evident and one finds plenty of opportunities to make war on them. One appreciates the good days spent at the Senior Scholasticate, and in advance one can foresee how one must act so as to profit still better by them.

I am sending a few lines to the students to tell them we share in their happiness. Yesterday - the day of the Ordinations, all of us offered Holy Communion for their intentions.

Counting always on your good prayers and the advice of my revered Director,
I am, dear Father,
Your obedient and respectful child,
J Shanahan⁴⁵

28 April 1896

Dear Father,

Thanks for the affectionate lines that you added to the last letter that the students sent us from Chevilly. I am doing my best to act on the good counsels that you gave me so as not to forget them. I re-read them from time to time. That does not mean, Father, that I never fail. Thus for example I am not always very charitable; there more than elsewhere lies my old defect. For some time I have taken charity as the subject for my meditation. While acting as prefect more than elsewhere there is need for a good store of it; mine is scanty enough. With the help of the Blessed Virgin and the good prayers of the venerable Fathers and my confrères, the year will end well enough.

I assist regularly at the Community exercises - out of routine perhaps to a certain extent. But the good God will take into account the little bit of good will I put into them. At the beginning of meditation I tell Him I have no taste for it - that I am as dry as a piece of wood; full of faults, yet I beg Him not to forget me all the same. For all that, I do what you have so often recommended me to do - three Communions in the week, weekly confession. Spiritual Reading too I do fairly regularly - Rodriguez and the Epistles of St Paul. Badly though I do all that Father, if I neglect anything, things do not go so well. One is left so much to oneself in this house that if you do not make new and continual efforts daily, you would sink very low. My relations with my confrères are excellent. The English classes are going well. It is with good Father Thierry that Mr Donnadieu and myself do our Theology. I hope to finish it before the end of the year so that I can revise it all before I return to the Senior Scholasticate.

During the Easter holidays we went to Ameslettes, the country of St Benedict Labre; then to Mont des Cates to see the Monastery and the Trappists. None of the four of us had any desire to remain there. We often go with the students to the beautiful forest near St Venant...vieux Berquin, the birthplace of the Abbé Lemire. I think it was his father we saw yesterday in front of the house, a fine old man with white hair.

Mr Krauss has written to me. He had sad news - the death of the good Mr Rose. This dear confrère was in excellent health on Palm Sunday. Before the Procession he remained with the pupils in front of the Cathedral in a place that was too exposed to the sun. He had on his biretta and was hardly standing there for ten minutes. It was more than he was able for; the following day he had Yellow Fever and on Good Friday at 12.45 he departed to a better world. It was the anniversary of his arrival in Para (Brazil). A few days later Mr Krauss received the letters that you addressed to both of them. He will write himself and give you a fuller account of the last days of Mr Rose. Nearly everyone wept at his funeral.

To die at a post of honour, far from his family and country and such a beautiful death. The good God would only give such a grace to someone He loves in a special way. The Chevilly students won't forget to write to Mr Krauss; the poor lad must be very upset, but his spirit of faith is strong enough

to accept with his whole heart this little cross which Divine Providence has sent him in taking his companion.

Recommending myself to your good prayers dear Father Director,
I remain in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.⁴⁶

16 June 1896.

The Senior Scholastics at Merville are very annoyed to learn that their Father Director (Vanhaecke) has been named Second Assistant of the Congregation. You will not hold that against us, Father? You know so well each of those whom you loved to call "your dear children"! Then we had such confidence in you and not without reason. Was it not for this very reason that it has pleased the good God to call you to other tasks. He will no doubt see about giving us another director, but He does not wish on that account that you should cease to hold the same place in the confidence and especially in the prayers and affection of your old *dirigés*.

Now, Father, it is necessary that I should tell you how things have gone since my last letter. I had promised you that I should be an exemplary student. In fact, Rodriguez has been abandoned for a fortnight. As for meditation I have had to sweat blood and water not to sleep. Even my work itself leaves much to be desired. In spite of vigorous resolutions in regard to charity, so recommended in your last letter - I have failed pretty much in it again, though less than often all the same. All this shows you that I have not much reason to be proud. But thank God I am launched again. Perhaps it is only the Sacred Heart Who has rendered me this service. Constancy in following your counsels which are the voice of God for me, a little good will and a great confidence in the Blessed Virgin should be enough to carry me safe and sound to the end of the year.

As regards the Community exercises, weekly Confession, Communions and Rosary, I believe I have failed very rarely. My duties? My English class goes as usual - fair enough. I always go on the walks with Mr Donnadieu. As regards discipline I lack the qualities of a good Prefect - among other things - plenty of energy (lit. plenty of fist) and a ready tongue. Things are not going too badly.

However, an incident occurred last Friday 12th June, which struck me and which I feel I should make known to you as my Director and also as the 2nd Assistant of the Congregation. On Friday then, the afternoon walk was under the direction of Father P Dumont; Mr Donnadieu and I being the prefects. All of us went into a tavern for afternoon tea. There were three tables; Mr Donnadieu was at one, I was at another and Fr Dumont was walking about. At the table where I was, two students began to behave in an undesirable manner, by their gestures and loud voices. They behaved just like drunkards. Pardon the expression, but it is the truth. I made several remonstrations but in vain. Father Dumont then came to them and did likewise but without effect. The two 'gentlemen' did not get any quieter. It was in this condition that they made some jokes in the worst possible taste to the young girl serving us. She ignored them disdainfully. Then one of them - Mr Br---le left his place, took a hat belonging to the owner of the tavern, put it on over one ear and returned to his place. Then he threw it on the ground in the way of the girl already mentioned. All was done in imitation of a

drunkard. I drew Mr Donnadieu's attention to what was happening - we were seated back to back. He made B pick up the hat, rebuking him openly at the same time. B among other insolent remarks replied that "he would stick his knife between his two eyes (sic)". This scene shocked all who witnessed it so much that we could only wish to get away. I don't know what the people in the tavern must have thought of us.

Once we were outside the bigger boys said that such a thing should not have happened in a grammar school. They also resolved never again to speak to that individual, henceforth an outcast to them, to their master, and to the College, adding that as soon as they returned to the house, they would demand the expulsion of B. As to the second - a Councillor of the Sodality of Our Lady, they would also ask that he should no longer call himself a Child of Mary. Half way to the College, B declared that he would not return to the College anymore. Fr Dumont was informed of this. B did not return. At four o'clock in the morning (Saturday) four policemen looking for a tramp come upon our individual thinking they had made a great catch. The College was informed of the capture, as he had said to the amazement of the police, that he was a student of Merville College. They went in a car to look for him.

Meanwhile on the return from the walk, the senior boys themselves went to find Father Superior (Fr Francois Riaux). M B was not expelled and I don't know if he has been punished. This explains perhaps why some of the more serious-minded among the students have said that they will not return to the College in October. The Councillor of the Children of Mary still holds that position. It is possible that Father Superior does not know all. Up to this no one has asked for information from the prefects of the walk; most of the pupils have been interrogated. One of them has been charged with causing a disturbance. It is true that we have told everything to Fr Dumont in case by any chance he had not seen all himself. The step taken by the students was on their own initiative. It is not for us to blame them for what they were going to do, but to lead them to accept what Father Superior says or does. Since then we have refrained absolutely from speaking of it to them or to each other.

But who is this M B? He is a pupil of the French course and the last in his class; he boasts before his companions of having been expelled from five Colleges - one being a Grammar school (Maugaix). Apparently it was he who recently took it on himself to explain to one of the children in the College the facts of life in detail. This occurred three or four days before this child's First Communion. He himself would have spoken of it in the Dining room before the Seniors, but they reported it to their prefect. He warned the Dean of Discipline. Moreover this among others is the general theme of B's conversations. That explains their indignation on Friday evening.

If I am reporting this unpleasant episode it is not that I am accusing those running this house of negligence. They see and know better than I what should be done. As for me, I have been and still am painfully shocked and I would say, almost scandalised. This explains the report I am sending you on my own account, unknown to anyone.

While giving you full and entire liberty to use this as you judge best, still I wish to say also Father, that this letter is for you alone.

I welcome in advance with entire submission any correction you may see necessary to give me, and I am ready to carry out promptly all you may ask me to do. It is in these dispositions that I remain with respect and affection,

Big Changes

While Joseph Shanahan was away at Merville, having his first experience of school life as prefect and teacher and looking forward to resuming his studies for the priesthood, the authorities of the Congregation had more serious preoccupations. The Superior General, Fr Ambrose Emonet, had resigned on account of his grave illness. This illness came at a time when the Congregation was faced with serious problems, which called for firm leadership. The Government was mounting a progressively hostile attitude to the church and to religious orders in particular. The insistence on military service was a set-back to the programming of studies at Chevilly and the supplying of a regular quota of newly-ordained men for the missions as well as prefects for the colleges. These colleges were becoming a burden in that a number recently taken on in the hopes of providing much-needed financial aid and an increase in vocations had not lived up to expectations and were actually holding down precious personnel. Then there was the recent '*Lois des abonnement*' which threatened to impose a substantial tariff on the resources needed for the works of formation etc.

A General Chapter was fixed for 1896 to elect a new Superior General and to face up to the mounting problems. Many of the delegates voted for Fr Vanhaecke because of his proven abilities and his broad outlook. In the event the chapter opted for a more charismatic personality, Mgr Alexander Le Roy, noted missionary and explorer in East Africa and appointed Vicar Apostolic of Gabon in 1892.⁴⁸ It was with Mgr Le Roy that Joseph Shanahan would have to deal as Superior General for the next thirty years and let it be stated at the outset that these two high-minded men got to understand one another very well.

One of Mgr Le Roy's first acts was to appoint Vanhaecke as his right-hand man. We have seen from Shanahan's letters to him how much the scholastics regretted losing him as director. He was replaced by Fr John B Pascal, home on leave from his mission in Gabon. The news of his appointment took some time to reach Merville but Joseph Shanahan made no delay in writing to him pledging his full co-operation in what was bound to be quite a challenge for the new director. He is also apprising him of his own position: he had been sent on a temporary mission by Fr Vanhaecke and he hoped that he would now be allowed to continue where he had left off in the senior scholasticate. His letter makes his position clear.

28 June 1896.

Dear Reverend Father Director, (John B Pascal)

If your Senior Scholastics at Merville have not been in a hurry to write to you, on the news of your appointment as Director of the Scholasticate, you will kindly not attribute this delay to indifference. (There were five other 'prefects' or Senior Scholastics employed at Merville). In fact we only read of it on the arrival of Fr Campana.

Certainly all of us are very sorry to lose the good and venerated Father Vanhaecke. He will always hold a large place in the esteem and prayers of his former spiritual children. It is a duty of filial gratitude and affection. Does that mean, Father, that you will not have your share of the respect and affection we owe you? Oh no! Father. We know that you are "an old missionary" and that in losing our former Director, the Blessed Virgin has given us another who resembles him in every way. It is for us a sacred duty to make the separation from your dear mission less difficult for you. We cannot

make you forget it, for it is engraved in your heart. But at least we can make the task less painful for you by our piety, our docility in following your good advice and our unshaken constancy in carrying it out. From now on we shall have unbounded confidence in you; complete frankness in letting you know of all that interests us. In this way we hope to become good missionaries, capable of following as best we can in the footsteps of our seniors in Africa, our eyes ever fixed on the banner of Christ that they have carried so nobly and so high for so many years!..Ah! Father, at the thought of Africa nothing costs any more! What a sacrifice for those who have been there not to be able to return there any more! As for me I have three years more to wait. I have done only one year's Theology. I have been teaching English at Merville since January. I have not yet received the tonsure. I have written regularly to Father Vanhaecke. Since May, pressure of work has prevented him from replying. At the moment all goes well. I have but one desire; to return to the Senior Scholasticate the day after the Prize-giving here. It is the one request that I dare ask of you for the moment.

Our confreres at Chevilly do not write very often to us. I am writing a few lines to my fellow-countrymen - the Irish.

Your child in the Ss Hearts of Jesus and Mary,
Joseph Shanahan.⁴⁹

The notebook already referred to in which Shanahan transcribed poems in English, French and Italian contains a poem entitled *L'Echo*. After it in brackets are the words: '*P. Thierry – départ de Merville 29 July 1896.*' This is the only date given in the notebook of eighty-one closely written-pages and it presumably refers to Shanahan's departure from Merville to Chevilly. Fr Paul Tierry, who taught *philosophie* class, was noted for his hobby of composing poems about all sorts of subjects and events. Shanahan had known him as a teacher in Cellule and while in Merville he studied theology under his guidance in order to qualify for having that year accepted as one of the required years of his theology course. That Thierry was very interested in botany and the sciences generally we learn from his obituary.⁵⁰ He may even have influenced Shanahan in taking such a keen interest in the matters transcribed in that notebook which he preserved though all the vicissitudes of his varied career. It is not clear how competent Fr Thierry was in theology nor is there any trace of a report sent by him to the professor of dogma in Chevilly, Fr Décaillet. In fact there was to be no immediate need for such a report because of unexpected changes at Chevilly.

Novitiate extraordinary

While Mgr Le Roy was reflecting on the problems created for his administration by the Government in the matter of compulsory military service and financial demands, he was posed an extra problem by a decree from Rome (*Auctis*) directed to religious congregations.⁵¹ Until then many religious orders put off the novitiate, or special formative year, till after ordination. It gave a good opportunity to provide a pastoral training at a time when the candidates were more mature. Profession took place at the end of that final year, that is, religious vows were taken. Due, however, to the high level of applications to Rome by religious order priests to be relieved of their engagements in order to opt for the secular priesthood, it was now being insisted on that ordination be postponed till after perpetual vows or at least till three years after first vows. The main problem about implementing this directive was the disruption it could cause in the seminary arrangements and in the regular arriving on-stream of

new priests for the various missions. The Congregation put its case before the Roman authorities and asked to be exempted from complying with the new directive. They were told that there were to be no exceptions to the law but that they would be allowed ample time to implement the new regulation with the minimum of disruption. The solution actually adopted by Le Roy and his council involved maximum interruption for one year only. It was decided that all students who were free to do so ('disponible') should report for starting their novitiate in August 1896.

The total number reporting for this novitiate year was two hundred! It was necessary then to conduct three separate novitiates simultaneously! The senior group, i.e., those just ordained and ready for their final year, did their novitiate as foreseen at Orly. The rest were to do their novitiate at Chevilly but in two separate 'houses', each with its own staff. Those starting off their senior studies - forty in number - were to have as their master of novices Père Pierre Genoud, later bishop. The largest group – sixty-three in number, those who had done Philosophy and a part of their Theology, were to have Fr Grizard as their master of novices with Fr O'Gorman as his assistant. Joseph Shanahan belonged to this last group.

Père Jean-Marie Grizard

As Joseph Shanahan was to refer several times in his spiritual journal to the notes taken during this novitiate year and to offer special gratitude to Almighty God for the gift of Fr Grizard's direction, we take a brief look at this man's career and personality. He was born at Oye, Seine et Loire, near the Curé d'Ars' country.⁵² In fact when trying to decide on what career to follow, he consulted the Curé and was told: 'You will be a priest; you will have a long career; and you will do a lot of good.' Fr Grizard was explicit in his recital of this message merely to scotch the stories put out by his students that he was told a lot more by the Curé! He was, in fact, to live to be ninety one - and perfectly lucid to the end. All his long life he was in constant demand as a spiritual director in person and by correspondence from within the Congregation and without. In fact, he was referred to by one order of nuns as 'Our Father General'. He was particularly involved with the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny and with the Reparatrice community in Rue d'Ulm, Paris.

Grizard's first appointment after ordination was as director of the juniorate in Cellule. After but three years he was recognised as a master in the spiritual life and was appointed to the senior scholasticate at Chevilly, then recently acquired. He helped to build and organise the senior house of studies and was to be involved in the work of formation of future priests for thirty years. He was also a man of sound sense for administration. He was appointed General Counsellor at the Mother House and acted as Vicar General of the Society during Fr Emonet's illness. He took charge of the preparations for the General Chapter in 1896. To him also fell the duty of supervising the arrangements for the Novitiate Extraordinary, 1896-97.

It was when Fr Grizard had been originally appointed master of novices, that is in charge of the final year of formation of the young priests, that he really came into his own as a spiritual master. His regular daily conferences were memorable in their sure delivery, aimed at correction of faults, formation of character and initiation into the spiritual and pastoral dimensions of the priesthood. He could be quite strict - even severe - with these young men, but it was his patience and understanding that they liked to recall later.⁵³ Although he had not known the Venerable Libermann he had lived with men trained by him, and made it his object to be imbued with his spiritual outlook. Indeed he succeeded so well in this that it was felt that when he died in 1927

that the last link with Libermann had snapped. But his novices' most vivid memory was of his final conference to them where he invariably summed up his message to them for life: '*Magister unicus - Jesus Christus*'. You have only one Master, Jesus Christ.

Shanahan had the highest regard for his master of novices as is obvious from the spiritual note book from his novitiate year which he cherished and dipped into during moments of special reflection. He was always amazed to find his soul reflected in it each time as in a mirror. We quote what he wrote 27 November 1927 just two years before Fr Grizard's death:

Today I happened to come across this little notebook. I took it and read it...God bless our venerable Master of Novices - Fr Grizard. Thirty years have elapsed since he formed his last group of novices but the words he spoke during the novitiate, the example he gave, the perfect instrument he was in the hands of God, have produced in every soul that listened to him and gave itself up to God through him, is the better for it today.

To read over the few pages in which my own heart and soul were exposed with their failings of thirty years ago is to understand how wonderful was the direction given to us. We were enabled to see ourselves guided by the Director who in his turn was evidently guided by God. We saw and understood ourselves as we were. And what I was then I am today - the life-long struggle has gone on against the self-same failings and weaknesses. If only I had continued to take note each day of all my meditations! I would be a saint today instead of a miserable sinner full of imperfections, if not worse...

I thank God for the Director He gave me. I thank God for the graces He gave me then and since then unto today - innumerable graces. Thanks to my Blessed Mother Mary - Oh! Mother Mary how good you have been to me during all those years. And St Joseph and my Guardian Angel.⁵⁴

One would like to know what this gifted Spiritual director thought of Shanahan at this stage. Once Père Grizard had got to know each of the novices personally he entered a brief comment summing up his considered opinion of him. For Shanahan he wrote this comment 18 November 1896: 'He has come from Merville; a very good novice.' Then he used the French word '*sensible*' which is variously rendered in English as 'sensitive', 'impressionable', 'sympathetic'. After another four months, Grizard again filled in his comments about each novice. This time he wrote about Shanahan: 'a good candidate; serious-minded.'⁵⁵

There is quite an amount of extant contemporary documentation from which to build up a detailed picture of this critical year in the formation of these future priests and missionaries. And apart from general sources, such as the novitiate journal and the accounts published in the *Bulletin Général*, we are fortunate to be in possession of a notebook compiled by Shanahan at this time and to which he attached an importance during his later years.

First the general picture. Fr Grizard, the master of novices, is clearly seen to be the dominant influence, but his assistant Fr O'Gorman is also frequently mentioned in despatches. Officially his main sphere of action was as professor of Sacred Scripture and Ascetical Theology, but for the journalist his extracurricular activities understandably get more space, in particular his organising and conducting their many outings to churches and centres of historical and cultural importance in Paris and its suburbs. As there was a special jubilee year with indulgences to be gained by visiting specified churches they had an added incentive for these outings. The main churches mentioned are naturally Notre Dame, the exquisite church of Saint-Etienne du Mont,

and Notre Dame des Victoires. St Etienne is the centre of the area associated with Claude Poullart des Places and the Seminary he founded, but at this period it is unlikely that much interest would have been centred in that part of the history of the Congregation. Our Lady of Victories on the contrary would have been venerated as a family shrine because of its well-known associations with the Venerable Libermann.

Of course the principal shrine at which Libermann was venerated in those days was in the Tombeau, then situated within the very grounds of Chevilly itself. It was there in the miniature gothic chapel that the mortal remains of Libermann were re-interred after they had been transferred from their original-resting place in the grounds of Notre Dame du Gard near Amiens. This little chapel was a constant place of prayer, but on 2 February 1897 there was a very special ceremony as the novices of all three novitiates gathered round the Tombeau for a special ceremony of rededication as they came out from the annual conference given to commemorate the anniversary of Libermann's death. The journalist gives in some detail the substance of that conference, the theme of which was the clear signs of the hand of God at work in the life and work of Libermann. One is left with a strong impression that this generation of students were being continually grounded in Libermann's writings and his thoughts. During meals they had read for them the life of Libermann by Cardinal Pitra and this was followed by readings from Libermann's own writings which had been recently published in book form. But one gets the impression that the nearness of Libermann's remains in that little chapel more than anything else made these students feel that he was still very much alive and with them.

The sources from which Poullart des Places drew his spiritual ideals were not entirely neglected. As well as references to instruction on devotion to the Holy Spirit we are told that the book chosen for spiritual reading in common to replace the daily conference from time to time was Lallemand's classic *Doctrine Spirituelle*, the book which provided the backdrop to the foundation and dedication of the Seminary of the Holy Spirit in 1703.⁵⁶

The solemn celebration of the liturgy must have been one of the most formative aspects of community life at Chevilly. A great tradition in that sphere had been built up there since Fr Libermann had commissioned Fr Leon Levavasseur to compile a manual of liturgical usage based on the best Roman models. Fr Libermann felt that founders of future churches had a special obligation to start their people off on the correct note in such matters as religious music and liturgy.

One of the features of Chevilly was that since it was relatively easy of approach they had a steady stream of visitors who could be called on to act as chief celebrant for liturgical ceremonies. Most of these would be returned missionaries. One in particular must be mentioned, namely Fr Leo Lejeune. He was home from Gabon but was soon to be appointed Prefect Apostolic of Southern Nigeria. It was to Fr Lejeune that Shanahan was to be sent in 1902 when at last he was being posted to Africa, and in 1905 he was to succeed Fr Lejeune as Prefect Apostolic.⁵⁷ In 1896-97, however, Fr Lejeune was availing of his extended stay in France to make a tour of the country in a series of mission-animation exercises. One of his many initiatives was to re-activate the cause of the 17th century Breton missions preacher, Fr Michel Le Nobletz, whose life story had had such a determining influence on Poullart des Places. Shanahan's first contact with Lejeune may have been in January 1897 as the journalist at Chevilly records that it was Fr Lejeune who officiated at the Solemn High Mass, 24 January. The last occasion that Shanahan was to listen to that voice in full throat was when Lejeune sang the Salve Regina in Dekina before he left Nigeria in 1905 suffering from a terminal illness.

Life in the novitiate was not all a matter of devotional exercises and study. What was known as ‘manual labour’ was by necessity and by choice an important item in their rule of life. The house had to be kept clean and tidy and all without exception had to take turns at these chores. The lists of rosters are preserved for us in the journal. There was also organised manual labour outside the house looking after the extensive grounds and cultivating the vegetable and fruit gardens. This work was vital in the days before supermarkets. All that they ate and drank had to be produced on their property and there were many mouths to be filled. This work was also looked on as part of their education as missionaries; their physical well-being on the missions would have to rely very much on the mission garden. It would also be part of their policy to teach the native population the arts of cultivation of the soil for their own use. One can well imagine too that all this work at Chevilly was welcomed as a form of therapy to dispel the tensions of their communal régime.

That generation of novices was to leave a monument to their memory. In their spare time they planned and erected a specially-designed Calvary, which incorporated a large concrete globe or sphere on which various missions confided to the Congregation were indicated. When completed, an amateur photographer recorded the two large separate groups of novices spaced round the Calvary. Unfortunately it has not been possible to identify Shanahan in either group.

There are references in the journal to some military personnel from a local barracks who came to Chevilly to take part in retreat exercises. These may well have been clerical students who were doing their compulsory military service at the time - among them some of the senior students from Chevilly.

Père Grizard, being the superior as well as the senior master of novices, is referred to occasionally as being absent from his daily conferences to the novices. On one occasion he surprised them by saying that he would be absent for some eight to fifteen days. He was actually going to Ireland as the official visitor to prepare a report in depth on the province for the new Superior General, Mgr Alexander Le Roy. The fact that he was absent from his important duties at the novitiate from 15 January to 4 February, i.e., twenty days, gives us some hint of the problems he found he had to try to sort out in Ireland!⁵⁸ But the work in the novitiate did not exactly suffer in his absence. His able understudy was Fr O’Gorman.

So far we have been dealing mostly with the general situation which was there for students to make to avail of for their advancement in the spiritual life and in absorbing the ethos of the Congregation. The question remains then, what advantage did Shanahan himself make of all this carefully organised apparatus of the religious and community life of the novitiate year? We have no extant letters from him for this year, but as already mentioned we do have the notebook compiled by him for his own spiritual progress, a totally private document which he did not expect anyone else would one day examine to see what it revealed about his inner thoughts.⁵⁹ The fact that this notebook was carried with him through life and was occasionally consulted and always highly valued gives it an added dimension as a document.

On it he wrote: “I consider all that is contained in this notebook as ‘secrets of confession’”. And, though this written document is not really covered by the seal of confession in the theological sense of that word, one can understand why Fr Shanahan should have so described it to protect it from prying eyes during his life time. In it he is speaking not to human beings but direct to Almighty God and to Our Lady. And without hesitation he sees himself as a sinner striving with God’s help to be a saint. As he gets to see his real self under the guidance of the Master of Novices’ expert lectures he feels he can cry out with St Peter: “Depart from me O Lord for I am a

sinful man." A thought that consoled Shanahan' as he tells us' is that Our Lord was tempted in all things as we are. If he had known St Patrick's Confession at the time he would have appreciated why the opening words read: "I am Patrick, a sinner..."

The minute script used by Shanahan may not have had as its purpose to make it more difficult for anyone but himself to peruse but it certainly must have helped to concentrate his own mind at the time. The opening page of Shanahan's spiritual diary is worth quoting as it puts us in the picture so to speak. At the top of the page we have the capital letters F.C.S., which stand for 'Fervour, Charity, Sacrifice' - words spoken by Fr Libermann as a guide for the members of his society as he lay dying; A.M.D.G. *Ad majorem Dei Gloriam* - 'For the greater Glory of God,' the motto of St Ignatius Loyola whom Shanahan had taken as his patron at Confirmation; and J.M.J, 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph.'

Having nailed his colours to the mast, as it were, he starts:

This notebook begun the First Friday of April will accompany me wherever I go. In moments of difficulty I will reread it. The memory of these happy days in the novitiate, a period of peace, happiness and prayer, will help to reanimate me. I will recall my good resolution, the splendid conferences which God arranged for me to hear through the mouth of his minister; the good example of all virtues given by my confreres."

As to why Shanahan decided at that stage of the novitiate to keep a spiritual journal we can't say for sure but it is most likely that the suggestion came from the Master of Novices, who wrote in his notes about Shanahan that he was a 'serious' candidate. From his expert knowledge as a director of souls he must have seen that Shanahan was the type who could profit by such an exercise.

Shanahan proceeds to name all his fellow novices individually, sixty-three in number, with many of whom he would be in close contact in later life and five of them being Irish. He then continues:

Recalling then how I once saw clearly the goal and the means to attain it, I will set myself to work with the same ardour as in the novitiate. I also want to become a good and valiant missionary. Neither the Congregation nor the heroic phalanx of apostles of which I am part, nor our King Jesus Christ will be ashamed of me. I beg this grace from you my divine Saviour in virtue of the precious blood you have already shed for me on calvary, through the intercession of Mary, my good guardian angel and my holy patrons.

And lest one think that these are merely the outpourings of a novice with little real connection with a later life on the mission, we skip forward thirty years to the moment when he accidentally reopened this little note book. He wrote this time in a far more mature and open hand:

Friday 25 Nov. 1927 Today I came across this little book. I look and read it. God bless our Venerable Master of Novices, Rev. Fr Grizard. Thirty years have elapsed since he formed his last group of novices, but the words that he spoke during the novitiate, the example he gave, the perfect instrument he was in the hands of God, have produced in every soul that listened to him, gave itself up to God through him, is the better for it today. To read over the few pages in which my own heart and soul were exposed with their failings of thirty years ago is to understand how wonderful was the director given to us. We were enabled to see ourselves guided as we were by the director, who in his turn was guided by God. We saw and understood ourselves as we were then, and what I am today. The life long struggle has gone on against the self-same failings and weaknesses...

Much of what Shanahan has written in his spiritual diary was inspired by the lectures ‘conferences’ given by Fr Grizard, but we are by no means left with an impersonal *résumé*. Far from it. Shanahan has made the thoughts thus distilled very much his own applying them from time to time to his own situation.

The first series of talks were on obedience in religious life. The approach to the topic is redolent of a former understanding of religious obedience, stressing very much the role of the superior as God’s representative. It is obviously in the tradition of St Ignatius, and Shanahan, having taken the name Ignatius in Confirmation, naturally takes readily to St Ignatius’ approach summed up tersely as: “We serve either God or Satan.” He goes on to outline the chain of authority from God to the individual through his superior, carrying out not merely the details of his orders but submitting one’s judgement to him - secure in the belief that submitting one’s judgement to that of the superior, even when he may be wrong, is doing God’s will. Such obedience - giving all to God - is seen as a holocaust. He adds that he belongs to a congregation where abnegation of self is achieved mainly through obedience, and that abnegation of self was seen as a vital factor in the apostolate as expounded by Fr Libermann. That this does not mean a life of slavery is explained by the quotation from St Gregory: “To serve God is to reign.” As for his own resolution for the future he writes:

Love will be the one driving force of my life. When one loves nothing costs. When one loves God how sweet is to accomplish his least desires. The man who studies good literature, the fine arts does so purely out of love. Ask him if the work costs him. And yet what trouble he has gone to. But the acquisition of the object of his researches – so empty in themselves – nevertheless will compensate him a thousand times for the trouble he has taken to acquire such a small possession. I too wish to succeed in possessing the very source of Beauty – God.

Apart from the fact that Shanahan in his life and his letters was seen to have a keen eye for beauty in all its forms, this reference to his personal wish to succeed in possessing the source of ‘Beauty’ – God – must have had a special significance in the light of his lengthy composition in his other notebook from this period – a mini-treatise on the nature of Beauty.

The great Liturgical feasts have always been at the centre of Christian spirituality, so we are not surprised that they feature much in Shanahan’s diary. Passiontide and Easter are at the heart of the liturgical year, so it is of interest to learn what reflections Shanahan recorded on these feasts. When he considers what Christ suffered for him as depicted in the Stations of the Cross he asks what should be his reaction. First, recognition of what Christ had suffered. Then the firm resolution to avoid sin and to accept in a spirit of patience whatever sufferings come his way. He is ashamed that his own reaction in prayer is so cold and indifferent. Then unexpectedly he lifts the veil on his struggle against his wayward nature:

It is long since I promised you O Divine Saviour to correct that fault which is the cause of all my falls and I have not yet done so. O Jesus I beg for the strength to resist this fault and to overcome it. I ask this through your so painful passion. Thanks for the worries that I have experienced in this matter. O Mary, My good angel, St Joseph, and my holy patron saints obtain for me that grace.

Then as part of the plan for each meditation he mentions his ‘Resolution’: “I will especially not voluntarily delay on any useless thought or other, and for that reason I

will keep myself always occupied – Courage, energy, confidence.”

Shanahan’s next meditation is on Religious life. He thanks God for his almost miraculous intervention in bringing him to where he now finds himself. He is convinced that the congregation is specially suited to his needs. But his faults continue as revealed to him by the conferences of Fr Master: belittling confreres, preferring to go on recreation with the more pleasing confreres, fault-finding. He asks for the grace to overcome these faults and resolves never to speak evil about former superiors or confreres, and to go on recreation with a joyful heart.

The recurring references to his failures during recreation may sound puzzling to those unfamiliar with the rule of life in a seminary in those days. Silence reigned inside the building at all times where life consisted of study, common exercises – prayer, meals, work etc. But life is mainly about relationships and the only time the students came in real live contact with one another was when they met on their walks around the grounds or on ‘*promenades*’ i.e. communal long walks outside. The natural tendency was to choose the companions one got on well with, but they were obliged by the rule to avoid this and to step in with the first to arrive on the scene. The main purpose of this rule was to accustom them early in life to accept all as equals in order to prepare them for the ministry. Also it was hoped to avoid unhelpful relationships or cliques based on common tastes and attitudes, often fostering critical attitudes to other confreres and even to those in authority. There was little else they could talk about as they had practically no contact with life outside the seminary. There were no competitive games for them to work off their pent-up energies, so there was the tendency to debate robustly matters discussed at lectures etc. Personal antipathies naturally surfaced from time to time. At this stage Shanahan did not find it easy to adapt to all his confreres, but in the spirit of the novitiate as a time to root out one’s faults in view of future life as priest and missionary he strives hard to overcome this shortcoming.

For the Feast of the Sorrows of Our Lady he recalls the words of Jesus. “Woman behold your son,” and comments “And what an exchange for her own son!” As he confesses his part in adding to her sufferings by giving heed to the voice of the demon and his own passions, he adds: “You love me in spite of my faults. Obtain for me the grace of perseverance in my vocation, that I may be a good missionary. To that end obtain for me the grace to overcome my great dominant passion which I don’t have to mention by name to you.” Resolution: “Compunction; courage and cheerfulness.”

There follows a section entitled ‘My Direction’, which most probably refers to his periodic in-depth interview with the Director. Under the heading ‘Dominant fault’ he has this comment: “Many times tempted; almost every time, thanks to the grace of God, I have succeeded in repelling the temptation. I have carried out two or three times the small mortifications or rather avoiding ‘unmortifications’ I had resolved to undertake. During free recreation periods as far as it depends on me I will chose to be with confreres for whom I have the least attraction. Other fault: Self-love. It appears that I have yet a good dose of that. During these 15 (25?) days I don’t think that I have voluntarily delayed over thoughts of that nature.” As he reviews his Piety and Prayer (meditation or mental prayer, that is) he is fairly happy with his progress. He then prays to God as usual through the intercession of Our Lady, his guardian angel and patron saints, that he persevere and become more perfect each day so as to become a good missionary. Resolution: “I must keep a careful watch over myself in Springtime. I am given to dissipation.”

Palm Sunday causes him to reflect on his own coldness in prayer. As he

meditates on the events of that day in the life of Jesus, he finds himself as cold as ice, but of course not really indifferent; he wants to be humble like Jesus in his Passion and ready to bear with his own crosses. He is convinced that the Lord will never abandon him and that in spite of all his faults that he will make of him a good missionary through the intercession of BVM and his patrons.

Simple but sincere reflections, conscious of his faults, eager to improve – and all in order to be a good missionary. This, the main aim of the novitiate as conducted over the years by Fr Grizard, Shanahan has made very much his own concern.

For each day of Holy Week he has a page – some twenty-five lines – of colloquy direct with the Lord based on the events of Christ's Passion and death, simple but very personal reflections on what Christ did for love of him and what little he has done in return, but with resolutions to try to overcome his failings, bear patiently the crosses that come his way and pay greater attention to the preparation of the subject for Prayer.. For example he has these lines for Tuesday of Holy Week: "Christ totally submitting to God's will, no word of complaint. What should I do? Try to become more serious than I am, take more care in preparing for Prayer, be indifferent on recreation as regards my companions, and, in face of all suffering I may have to bear, to help me to do all that, may I think on Calvary." All quotations from Sacred Scripture are in the Latin Vulgate, which because of their use in the Liturgy and spiritual writings at that time were very familiar and were redolent with the rich tradition of devotional reflection in a way that perhaps the more accurate vernacular versions can never match.

For Spy Wednesday he writes: "Jesus I wish to love you with all my heart, to offer you my compassion. But to do this I need your grace to resist courageously against the temptations sent by the demon. I beg this in virtue of the love which made you die for me 1900 years ago..."

His reflections on the Washing of the Feet on Holy Thursday are directed to the priesthood towards which he looks forward eagerly: "The humility of Jesus washing the feet of the apostles. What respect for those soon to be ordained priests – his representatives through the ages and peoples. What esteem I should have for this favour of the priesthood, which will be conferred on me very soon. Jesus Christ did not hesitate to go on his knees to his priests. What purity one must have then." As he prays for the graces he needs for that vocation he realises that he must pray not merely for himself but for all his confreres and for all who will receive Christ in Holy Communion. He takes up this theme again for Good Friday when he is reflecting on his own part in the Passion of Christ: "Pardon for our part in your sufferings. First for all my sins: lack of zeal in trying to correct in myself the faults least compatible with my vocation, lack of energy, of inconstancy, my inclination to satisfy myself in all things – praying with little fervour. Pardon also for my confreres in the novitiate, for the Congregation, for the Church. Remember you died 1900 years ago for us all, and for the poor Blacks, especially those evangelised by our congregation, and for all who have not known you but who wish to know you.. For this day receive my homage and that of all who have never known you or prayed."

Again for Easter Saturday he rejoices that Christ once in heaven will ever have his arms outstretched to protect him from this and that temptation because of what he suffered for him. He then thinks of all the others Christ loves. "I pray for the other novices, for the virtues they will need as missionaries – love of God without reserve, abnegation, generosity, fervour, charity, faith, purity, perseverance.." And reminding us once again how important a training ground was the recreation period he writes his Resolution as result of his reflections: "I will be indifferent on recreation."

Easter Sunday he rejoices ‘with the whole church, triumphant, militant together with the celestial hosts’ in celebrating the Resurrection of Christ. He says he looks forward to participating in Christ’s immortality in his own very body. What matters whether his life here on earth is to be short or long. But he adds that he hopes to serve in Africa!

Easter Tuesday. These were days of relative relaxation with added time for outdoor recreation, but in Fr Grizard’s plans there could be surprise changes of plans to prepare them for such eventualities in later life. Shanahan refers to Christ’s farewell gift of peace but feeling far from at peace with himself he asks what are the enemies of that peace which calms all passions. He answers: “attachment to creatures and the resultant dependence on events as they happen.” They were all wound up for an outing to Paris – on foot - to visit the great shrines of Montmartre and Our Lady of Victories when at the last moment the regulation was changed to manual labour for the day. He says: “I scarcely made my Prayer as a result. His Resolution is given as: “I will accept as joyously as I can the regulation the Superior will fix for us today. I will repress in me the first impressions which produce in me such feelings of disappointment.”

For the next day he writes that he had spent a happy day in spite of the disappointment. “So in future I will not be at the mercy of events – happy or otherwise.”

The postponed outing took place on Friday, 23 April. He writes that he was delighted with their visit to the great shrine of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre. He asks the Lord to remember the special prayers he made before the Blessed Sacrament exposed there. (Three years later to the day Shanahan would have the great happiness of saying his first mass on 23 April 1900).

In his reflections on the final words of Christ to his apostles: “All power in heaven and on earth is given to me: Go teach all nations..” he applies these words to himself being now called to share in the great power of Christ. He reflects on the responsibility this vocation imposes on him to be holy and “in so far as it depends on me to have the virtues of purity, humility and gentleness..” Resolution: “In moments of difficulty to remember that Jesus Christ is with me, and that the salvation of a great number depends on my fidelity.”

He might legitimately have felt that by this stage he was well on the road to having coped with his failings, but the words of the *Miserere* psalm stirred his conscience, i.e.“My sin is always before me” He writes:” Is there a fault in my life that I have not sincerely repented? From now on I must search out to see if anything is not recognised as evil. But regretting the past is not enough. In the present and the future I must commence seriously to serve God. I know I will fail, but not voluntarily. O God I beg for the grace to triumph over my dominant fault – source of all my defects.”

Next day he meditated on the theme of his defects especially during recreation and his findings must have come as a shock to himself. During recreation – in discussions overbearing, holding on to his own opinions even when he knows little about the subject. Yet abrasively arguing his point of view; his method of discussing showing disdain for the opinions of others. In his efforts at being witty – at times at the expense of others - many of his confreres are hurt in their feelings. He thus makes himself insupportable. People don’t hesitate to call him a liar. He is known to have a penchant for launching new views even false ones.

All this is so much at variance with what is known about Shanahan later that if it were written by someone else it would be rejected as unfounded. But this is

Shanahan speaking before God and not trying to paint a picture for the sake of effect. He prays: "Mary help me to get rid of my faults. May I have more respect for the dear members of Christ – those he loves so much. Resolution: 'Put in practice the opposite virtue to my identified faults, without discouraging myself.'"

Shanahan at this stage seems to have uncovered a veritable can of worms in his relations with his confreres, and he could easily have been discouraged at the prospect of the hill to be climbed to get away from his perceived defects. But there was more to come. His next entry reads: "Bad effects of too exterior joy and sorrow. Exterior joys, levity on recreation and walks, loud laughter, conversation about unsuitable topics - being too naturalistic – all undermines a taste for serious matters – reading, meditation. I must be more on my guard."

A possible explanation of why Shanahan became so conscious at this stage of his failings in his dealings with his confreres on recreation may be found in the notes he was transcribing into his special notebook on how one should conduct oneself in conversation etc. On page 78 he writes:

One must always be in harmony with oneself and show that constancy even in conversation. The words must be simple and not smack of affectation. One must be friendly, gentle, affectionate, modest, but also prudent and clear headed. Having an open, obliging mien, and with a countenance that shows a desire to welcome all with kindness, showing a readiness to listen to what others are saying. Not to be in too much of a hurry to respond but to respond as fits. Each person be allowed his turn to speak. One must never impose oneself or exploit matters for one's own profit. If you want to please all set out not to show off your wit but try to let others see that they also count for much. Try to lead them prudently to speak of matters in which they are interested and about which they may be better informed."

This was the ideal and Joseph was soon to realise that he was far from living up to it in practice.

Fr Grizard gave a talk on those whom he had known over the years who had quitted their vocation and had come to grief in one way or another. He listed the causes of their defection as Pride, Sensuality, lack of Piety, lack of openness. Shanahan finds that he has all these faults himself, especially sensuality of heart. He prays for the grace of final perseverance, but admits that it would be better not to be a priest at all than to be a bad one. His Resolution is that when he finds himself tempted to any of these faults mentioned he must say: "There is the devil trying to drag me down to hell."

When he tries to come to grips with the cause of his lack of success at Mental Prayer he feels that it is attachment to created things. He reflects that during the day he is often just amusing himself and not making a serious effort to live in the presence of God. He resolves to be more recollected, to keep more guard of his imagination, and above all to write out the subject of his mental prayer as he had often promised his Director but had failed to do so.

For the first day of May - the month of Mary as he remarks - he has a very personal reflection. May had always been a special month for him in the past. He thanks Mary for special favours but has to admit that the struggle still goes on and he feels it will be always so. He admits that with the years his passions seem to have increased in power. He lists as his special enemies - sensuality of heart, pride, inconstancy. He thanks God that he has made some progress but adds "Mary you know where I stand and how far I am from having acquired the virtues necessary for a good religious much less a priest. But I count on you, and in spite of the hardness of

the struggle I do not despair. Nobody invokes you in vain and, apart from being my mother, remember the special conditions in which I always find myself, and as 'Joseph' I have a special claim on your care. I must not allow myself to be shaken by anything, my imagination and my susceptibility. Resolution: "During the month of May to watch out well for purity. Increase in me that beautiful virtue."

The big retreat

The part of the novitiate recalled most clearly in later life by the novices was the special eight-day retreat given by Fr Grizard during which there was total silence. Shanahan gives it generous space in his diary. But though most of what he has to say is suggested by the lectures given by Grizard Shanahan makes it very much his own, and from time to time makes it personal applying it to himself. Naturally the material of these lectures were the main truths of the faith. The first lecture points out that before great events in his life Christ prayed at length, and as the priest shares in the mission of Christ the novitiate in preparation for profession had a special role. And just as Christ, though sinless, shared in the sufferings and worries of human life so must the priest be ready to assume that role. The fundamental truth stressed in the opening lectures was that as God can only act for his own glory what matters most in what happens to us is that the glory of God is achieved. Finding satisfaction in mere created goals will leave the heart empty. Shanahan had written in capitals at the start of his diary the letters A.M.D.G. 'To the greater glory of God' – so he warmed to the fuller exposition of this theme given by the Director. For 3 May, the Feast of St Augustine, he writes: "You have made us for yourself O Lord and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee. How true. I am now 26 and the things that have given me most pleasure, games, walks, soirées etc., what remains of them now?... Nothing was done specially for God. O God you have created me great but I am small. And is there yet some imperfect thing that I prefer to you? Resolution. "Not to waste energy in useless words or thoughts. To try to achieve balance of character. Again God has given us the means; the grace to choose the Good and the Beautiful, grace to supernaturalise the present moment and the ordinary things of life. We are given the instruments by God, the vehicle in which we are to travel to him; we are in charge not the vehicle."

As he tries to apply these general truths to himself he writes "All things are included in this plan - our humiliations, my sensitiveness, my enjoyment of things, self esteem – the most difficult thing for me. So when humiliations come at chapter or recreation I am not to object." Resolution: 'To be indifferent during recreation and promenades.'" Later he writes: "God should have the first place in my relations with creatures. Events, good weather, unhappy experiences, an agreeable function or otherwise, being professed or not, continue with studies or not, health or to be sent to a college to teach – is useful for me or not, agreeable. Nothing about God's glory! A worldly spirit pervades all. Is there any creature I love for its own sake, or is it always for myself. My actions are for success and approval. My function a waste of time? Or do I think first of the glory of God involved? The rights of man not the rights of God. The opinions of men, human approval... Christ did not look for human acclaim for the good things he did, not even for the miracles. He asked for silence. But I want approval for all here below. Christ in the temple and on the cross caused suffering to his mother, but his Father's work was his priority. "My mother, my brothers are those who do the will of God." Resolution: "I must mortify myself in my human affections."

Feast of St Monica, 6th conference. Having reflected on the influence of

Monica on her husband and her son he surprisingly lifts the veil on himself: "After reading the penitential psalms I resolved to make a good confession. Why I don't know. I promised Our Lady to go and reveal to Fr Master some affair which troubled me very much. What a painful moment! But it is done. O Mary thank you, thank you. How happy I am that I kept my promise. I know you will keep yours. I will make a good general confession. The rest of my noviciate will be happy. May the memory of that grace never leave my heart."

The conference best remembered in later life by the novices was the one with the theme *Magister meus unicus* - 'My one Master- Jesus Christ'. We find echoes of this theme in these notes. Christ is the model for all but in particular for religious and priests, who are to be his elite, ready to suffer heroically when called on. If offered the choice of a short or long life it must be long in order to suffer more for his glory.. The conference on religious obedience is seen in the light of renouncing all for Christ. But one is seen as a religious for one's own salvation; the priesthood adds a further motive for holiness, namely the salvation of others.

The following considerations about the role of the priesthood will help to appreciate Shanahan's own concept of the priestly office as he looked forward to his ordination. Here more than for any other topic Shanahan quotes freely from the Scriptures in Latin as if he had the words by heart. 'The priest shares in the ministry given to Christ by his Father. A ministry of reconciliation – sharing in Christ's power to forgive sins; a ministry of truth – teaching in the name of Christ; a ministry of reparation and homage on behalf of the church and the people, and God passes through the priest to people. (Later in life he will often remind his Missionary Sisters that they also are "consecrated instruments of God.")

When he comes to reflections on the Eucharist he realises that though all ages would not be long enough to prepare for the priesthood he longs for ordination as he feels he is 'urged by the love of Christ' himself. So he resolves that henceforth all his life will be a preparation for the priesthood. His reflections on Christ in the tabernacle are coloured by the devotional approach based on the theme that Christ is the prisoner of the tabernacle. Several times he comes back to the importance of preparing to meet the Lord in a special way in Holy Communion.

He sees the priest as being in the forefront of the battle – the Legion of honour. Who is the enemy? First the demon. Then the flesh. "My own dominant fault and an incredible self-love which becomes offended at the least provocation." Rounding off his reflections on the priesthood he feels that he has a triple obligation to be holy – as a religious, a priest and a missionary. Resolution: "I must constantly seriously strive to be a saint but with confidence and without undue worry."

Fr Grizard's 15th conference was on temptations and their part in God's plan. Christ himself was tempted. So were the apostles; he names Peter and Paul. So were the saints: he gives examples from the lives of Sts Francis and Catherine of Sienna. Lucifer refused to accept Christ and now he attacks him in us. How does he act? Sometimes like a lion; more often through our temperament in small matters, through the elements, through sorrow, sadness, depression, not being able to think or desire anything.

And why does God allow us to be tempted? To test our mettle, increase our merits. Temptation is the battlefield where we defeat the devil. Fr Grizard told them that the novices or priests most to be pitied are those who have arrived at their goal without having to come through temptation; the man who has been severely tested is the man you can rely on.

His closing words about the retreat are: "Fervour, Charity, Sacrifice. End of the

eight day retreat. Perhaps the finest in my life. Not a moment of boredom. And the grace from Mary to make a good general confession. I kept my promise and Mary kept hers. Yesterday at 9.30 I confessed to Fr Master. Never was I so happy. Prepare well for Holy Communion and Thanksgiving". His plan: "Love of God and my neighbour. Fervour in the service of God; sacrifice of all my pleasures and generous acceptance of difficulties, pains and temptations. Resolution: "To do well my mental prayer and my other exercises of piety."

Though Fr Grizard had not known Fr Libermann personally he was rated the best expert on Libermann's teaching. Several volumes of Libermann's letters had been published to date, so the students had access to Libermann's writings. Special prominence was given to Libermann's teaching on what he referred to as 'practical union' with God. A number of Grizard's lectures treat of this topic as we can see from Shanahan's notes under the titles practical faith and living in the presence of God. He states that this practical faith will help him overcome his laziness and inconstancy and not be discouraged by the difficulties presented by his passions. "So few of my actions are inspired by faith, I must try to supernaturalise my various actions."⁶⁰ And when Fr Grizard encouraged them to keep a bouquet as it were of the retreat he suggested the following topics: (a) Renunciation as explained. (b) Practical union with God recalling the Lord's word: "He who abides in me I will abide in him." (c) Sanctifying grace and all it means. (d) Habitual union. One offers all to God from time to time during the day, renewed again. (e) Actual union when special events occur.

Fine in theory, but next day he has to report about his own failure to live up to the ideal: "Often in my work I am not sufficiently supernatural. Even in my prayer I lose the presence of God. In my relations with my confreres I seek the agreeable and avoid what is painful. The little humiliations that come my way find me poorly prepared." Resolution: "I will offer to the Lord the annoyances I suffer in relation to my confreres." And again he has to report: "God is always with us but we are not with God. Nonchalance, indifference, distractions at prayer, allowing my imagination free rein."

As he reflects on the hymn to the Holy Spirit (*Veni Sancte Spiritus*) said in common at morning prayer everyday he says that we badly need the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to see what is good and what is not. "Often it is my own sweet will that is my guide. I am inclined to act under the impression of the moment and it takes little to impress me for good or for ill. I need the guidance of the Holy Spirit or pride will lead me with the love of pleasure and ease...I must be on the watch as my dominant fault causes me to act with less frankness in certain circumstances. Always the truth on my lips as well as in my heart. Holy Spirit with your light save me from the demon who knows me better than I know myself. Make me a good missionary, courageous, generous. When I judge myself or others I must ask is it by the light of the Holy Spirit that I judge."

As he continues to reflect on the role of the Spirit in the run up to Pentecost he writes:

The Ven. Libermann teaches that the missionary worthy of the name must be a man of absolute renouncement. His priority must be the interests of the poor Blacks. The more empty of creature attachments the more full of God. Not listening to the calls of the flesh but acting as a good soldier of Christ." Resolution: Once more it is: "On recreation and walks avoid self seeking; go with the first to arrive."

For May he has further thoughts on the relation between his life now and his ministry

later: "One must have love and esteem for one's vocation. Otherwise there is danger for himself and for others. He will criticise others and the congregation. I must examine my own attitude, avoid all criticism of my confreres, consider the disastrous consequences for my ordination if I am not well prepared; avoid people who have no love for their vocation." Resolution: "To be watchful of my conversation at recreation."

Then as he sees the novitiate coming to an end he recalls the Lord's words to his disciples: "You have not asked for anything up till now." He now lists his priorities as follows:

First the grace of final perseverance for myself

Nearest priority – the grace to make a good profession and be a good religious
As far as possible for a human being to be ready for the priesthood, especially
the grace of purity, charity, obedience, total renouncement of myself and the
world, generosity and constancy in combating my passions

I ask for the same graces for all the novices here and forever in the
congregation, but especially for those of the 2nd novitiate

I ask for them and myself the grace to be good, zealous, holy, valiant
missionaries. For that, grant, if it is your holy will, health of body and all the
spiritual gifts necessary

For the sake of the Blacks that I and the confreres will evangelise – that we be
faithful to the inspirations – that we do not fail

I ask for a special blessing for the Congregation, the Pope, the Church, for my
parents, brothers and sisters

Finally, pardon all my sins and negligences

O Mary, my patrons, obtain for me that I be heard.

Down to earth next day he writes: "I must be on the watch against sensuality
in eating and drinking. Especially drink; it goes fast to my head. That could be a
problem for me on the missions and colonies or elsewhere – if I give way to that
inclination." Resolution: "In reference to drink: I must drink only my own portion."
One must remember that wine was normally served for lunch albeit a diluted version.
And for the Feast of the Ascension he is still kept very much down to earth. "Poor
meditation. Distracted as often happens. How God can put up with me and call me to
a sublime vocation with all the many passions that I fail to control – lack of humility.
All I can do is humble myself in your presence and ask for pardon for all my sins.
Give me the courage to bear with my passions; this day of joy in heaven forget not
your poor child. I would not deliberately cause you pain." Resolution: "That I do not
lose courage because of my faults and that I try to avoid situations in which I have
failed."

For the Feast of the Mission of the Apostles he comments: "Jesus Christ is
sending us as he sent the Apostles. We have to fulfil the same mission and be saints as
were the Apostles the same mission as Jesus Christ who came to send fire on the
earth. Innumerable graces which we have to distribute. That is our vocation".

Veni Sancti Spiritus - Veni Pater pauperum Come thou Father of the poor. I
am so poor in spiritual goods. How many virtues I lack. O Holy Spirit give me the
spiritual goods I need – chastity, obedience, abnegation and a truly priestly soul – that
I may not be too attached to the affections of this world. You alone should be the
object of my love." Resolution: "To mortify myself in not seeking the company of the
confreres I prefer."

For 31 May he writes: "May almost finished. I have obtained some special
graces beginning with my dominant fault which has much less force. I beg Mary the

grace to finish the year well and make a good profession; that I may make a good month of the Sacred Heart (June). My sermon takes up all my time but I will be finished next Saturday. I put it under your protection. It takes place on the vigil of my baptism. I will be 26 years of age."

'My sermon' refers to the custom of the novice priests in the novitiate in the past having to preach their first public sermon – the audience being not a sympathetic public congregation but a rather critical group of his peers and professors. It was an ordeal that many dreaded - and that in spite of having been given much theoretical tuition on how best to preach. Shanahan in his special notebook has a detailed summary of such tuition. The title is Eloquence and the matter deals with the nature and object of eloquence in general with detailed advice on such matters as voice control, use of gestures, of emotion, imagination, logical argument etc. All this is applied to Sacred Eloquence which because of its object and matter is rated the supreme exercise of eloquence. If rules and definitions could produce orators then a generation of Bossuets could be expected.

Shanahan himself would one day be seen by others as a brilliant public speaker when addressing groups of mission helpers. His own comment on his first performance is highly critical: "My first sermon was a complete flop. May the name of God be blessed. From now on I will bear humiliations more readily. "It is good to have failed all round. For the past 15 days my spiritual exercises have been a failure. I was convinced myself of the truth of what I had intended to develop for my listeners. May the Sacred Heart bless me encourage me to persevere and in spite of my unworthiness enfold me in a little corner of his Sacred and all adorable Heart."

Next morning, still suffering from his humiliating experience he writes: "Prayer not done well this morning: occupied with everything but God. But one idea came to me: I must be more indifferent to the judgement of people than I have been. If I make foolish mistakes then I must have the courage to put up with them. No matter how people judge me I am the same in God's eyes. Certain faults I must avoid in my conversation. a) not to speak of myself either good or bad b) to be natural in my thoughts and manner of expressing them: I am using superlatives. I continually say: 'Splendid', 'Dreadful' etc. c) I must be careful of charity. O Mary obtain for me from the Heart of Jesus, purity of heart, patience and perseverance."

At times things must get worse before they get better. So it was for Shanahan. Next day he had to confess: "Yesterday I failed on all counts. I talked too much with no control over my words. The first thought that came I blurted it out hastening to make it known. It mattered little that there was no logic of thought. Due to this manner of acting I often say things that I should not. How often have I hurt one confrere or another. In future I will force myself to make it seem that it is they who are witty and not I. I will speak as little as possible especially of what concerns me. When someone starts a subject I will not try to turn it. The good God has allowed that the past has been for my shame. The future depends on me in all cases. May his name be blessed.

A bit better, but another thing: I was not able to take a humiliation which came some days ago. I find myself too often with the same companions. Even though much humiliated and pained I won no merit from it. During recreation I excused myself putting the blame clearly on all but myself – not what Our Saviour did even though he was innocent. Not the way my confreres act. O Sacred Heart pardon me. Mary console me and give me strength. At recreation to go with all the confreres and try to be happy and cheerful as far as it depends on me. Especially avoid criticising, and rid myself of that dreadful habit of laughing at all things and frequently". Resolution:

"To bear in silence and with no excuses all the disagreeable things that can be said about me...O Sacred Heart grant me the graces of gentleness, charity, purity, through the intercession of Mary, my good angel and patrons."

29 June Peter and Paul "Seven years ago I got the soutane. How many graces I have received since but was not faithful to them. Holy Apostles obtain for me in spite of my unworthiness to have a soul totally apostolic, - fervour, generosity and charity."

Visitation of Blessed Virgin – the First Friday of July. "Mary Mother of God went to great trouble to visit her cousin; a great lesson in humility for me. So when people say even the most stupid things about me it will help to make up for my sins; the courage to face up to the truth. Repress my own will and impressionability, I am so susceptible..

I must see all as the will of the good God and with that idea always in my mind I will be spared much worry and have the blessing of God to be a good religious and a good missionary".

4 July "First day of vacation. Profession in two months. I ask for fidelity, constant generosity. My model: "He did not please himself but God; and when faced with small privations I will bear them".

6 July Pilgrimage to Montmartre and Our Lady of Victories

7 July "Pitiful effort at prayer. I am doing nothing well recently. I had a fairly good opinion of myself. I am forced to change that. I am a nothing. Jesus pardon me; Mary obtain for me the grace to be always faithful to my vocation and duties. St Joseph I belong to you in a special way."

Death. For some days we are working in the cemetery. It is there one sees what we are. The clay covering Fr Reffé, Mgr Duboin, is so hard that one can barely move it with the shovel. More disturbing - one sees with horror the bones the clay covers and a few years ago they were in full health. They thought as little about death perhaps as I do now." Resolution: " To continue to pray for the dead, and as I rise and go to bed to remind myself that I must die." Shanahan had known Fr Reffé - the renowned Dean of Studies at Blackrock - when Reffé returned ill from Australia. He had preached the school retreat in Cellule in 1890 attended by Shanahan.

Under the title Resignation he has these thoughts:

For some time I have often failed in charity. I have certainly taken resolutions to pay attention to this matter but I have failed all the same. Every thing annoys me. I can put up with nothing not even my own faults.

I must realise that I can't work on my own. I need the good God. Perhaps I don't think enough about that. Two other things which easily upset me: 1) Confreres who appear to want to know everything about everybody. 2) Then there is the Submaster of Novices (Fr O'Gorman); about him in particular I must make a sort of effort never to mention his name and to keep a rigorous silence when anyone speaks of him. But with all that I am not discreet and I say what is good or bad and to every one all that passes through my head. O Mary my I triumph over my faults. Resolution: "I will offer Holy Communion for the people I don't like, and will offer it for the intentions of the souls in purgatory."

He gives no clue as to why he resolves not to speak about Fr O'Gorman in future. It is probable that because he knew him well in Langonnet, because he was so brilliant and was Irish, Shanahan may have been seen by the French students to have spoken about him too frequently. Shanahan and O'Gorman were to be life long friends.

Under "Thoughts suggested by the funerals to the cemetery of Frs Leclerc and

Brunnetti" he has these comments

One day I will be so carried. When and where? Then people will cease to talk about me. That is human life. Then what will it matter to have been happy, without worries, well thought of by all, then in an instant one must leave all. How important it is before arriving at this terrible passage on which depends eternity and be prepared for it by a holy life, a life of prayer, mortification, humility... O my God grant me the grace to have always before my eyes in difficult moments the thought of death. Resolution: 'I will continue to recite the act of contrition before going to sleep.'

Why do I allow myself to be disturbed by the smallest difficulties. Nothing that happens to me can happen without being allowed by the preceptive or permissive will of God. Then what is the use of tormenting myself trying to have things happen as suits me? So often during the day and in particular in times of suffering I will fortify myself with this consoling thought: God wills it and he wills it for my greater good.

I often complain that I have great faults and that I am not able to overcome them as I would like. Certainly I am capable of negligence, of nonchalance, but really God does not allow me to triumph so as to make me realise the misery of the human state and to show me how I should be merciful to other people because it is good for me. Therefore have courage under the protecting gaze of God fighting courageously against my dominant fault. Resolution: I will try in a manner to aim at having a balanced temperament. To accustom myself not to speak under the impression of the moment. When I am dying to recount a particular incident I will not do it.

I think that I behaved myself fairly well yesterday as regards that virtue. Nevertheless I am worried again. I am given to judging confreres, and especially to blaming them. Then I am one of those who can't bear to be so judged. My confreres are in the same boat so why judge them? The good God wants me to love them as Jesus Christ loves me. So today I will submit completely to that divine command. I will not speak at all of my confreres. I will not entertain any thought contrary to charity. ...I will pay attention to that especially during recreation. Before speaking about any matter to reflect well. That is the grace that I will ask for in Holy Communion just now.

First Friday of August.

Today is the last (one day) retreat of the novitiate properly so called. I have to reproach myself of many infidelities. I sincerely ask pardon of God. I sincerely regret not having done a better novitiate, for not having conquered my passions and not having acquired the virtues necessary for one called to so sublime a vocation.

The conference given by Fr Master had as object: "The spirit of faith in small matters":. Man is led by two principles: faith and reason. These two are not mutually exclusive but generally reason is obscured by the passions, and Faith also by the same. Reason judges things according to the advantages they bring; the greater the advantages the more important is the act. According to Faith it is diametrically the opposite because it judges things from a different perspective. Its priority is heaven; its code of honour is sanctity."

Practice "*Euge serve bona et fidelis..* 'Well done thou good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in small things; enter into the joy of the Lord.' 'Jesus Christ means by that that the great benefits of heaven and its delights are obtained by small things. "Whether you eat or drink or whatever

you do, do all for the glory of God." Consequently it matters little if in the eyes of people that the acts that I do are of little importance. Indifference about the judgement of people.

We are called by God to a triple vocation where we must do well the small things, especially the details of the rule. I must never consider as small the thing which embellishes my soul and gives me heaven. I have not sufficient spirit of faith. During the vacation I will be continually faced with the choice of duty or a natural satisfaction diametrically opposed. So I must never say. 'This is not an important matter, or worse I won't be seen.'

Lives of the Saints. The Blessed Virgin and St Joseph.

What did they ever do in comparison with Governors, Captains etc. of their time? And Our Venerable Father – he was considered a poor fool, a silly person that one supported out of pity.

Resolution: "May the members of the Congregation never forget their origins. Not the spirit of the world. Have a good and joyful vacation while at the same time doing my duty."

The great day of profession was fixed for August 15, but to the shock and dismay of all concerned, this ceremony had to be postponed for the two novitiate groups at Chevilly. The reason for this postponement may seem pedantic to those not acquainted with the requirements of Canon law, but as certain formalities had not been complied with at the start of the year, the novitiate was deemed not to have started in fact until these formalities had been fulfilled. As it was only late in December 1896 that the oversight had been detected, just as Fr Grizard was preparing to set out for his official 'visitation' in Ireland, the profession date had to be postponed till December 1897. There was no such problem for the regular novitiate at Grignon, of course. And there was no question of prolonging the novitiate for the novices at Chevilly while awaiting their profession.

So it was back to study for the 63 novices, Joseph Shanahan among them. As the profession ceremony was to take place at Chevilly there was no problem envisaged in the matter of anyone having to change his plans for that occasion. No one except Joseph Shanahan, that is. By December he would be hundreds of miles away in Rockwell to where he was unexpectedly transferred as prefect late in August.

¹ Shanahan spiritual diary 1897; Holy Rosary Archives, Generalate

² Blackrock Juniorate Register (BJR) No.200

³ Juniorate letters file, Blackrock College Arch (BCArch)

⁴ *Irish Spiritans Remembered* (ISR), Sean Farragher, Dublin, 1998, No.422

⁵ *Freeman's Journal* 3 Nov. 1885

⁶ *Le Révérend Père Amet Limbour* by R.P. Jules Groell, Grenoble, 1926

⁷ *Ibid.* pp35ff, *Bulletin Général (BG) XIV* pp75ff

⁸ *Blackrock College Annual* (BCA)1962 p. 179, cf. ISR Nos. 600 and 691 for his brothers

⁹ ISR 604

¹⁰ *Anscar Vonier Abbot of Buckfast* by Dom Ernest Graf, London, 1957, p.29f.

¹¹ *Spiritan Papers*, Generalate, Rome, No. 19 pp 31ff

¹² *The African Rosary* May-June 1944 p.18

¹³ *Groell op. cit.* pp73ff

¹⁴ *BG XV (I)* 1889 p. 331: *Sous son Ombre*, Lys St Joseph No. 650

¹⁵ HRS archives

¹⁶ ISR No.163

¹⁷ Shanahan Personal Papers(SPP), Gen Arch

¹⁸ BJR No. 540; IAPArch

¹⁹ *Histoire de la Province Spiritaine de France*, Jean Ernoult, Paris, 200, p.354; *Les Lieux Spiritaines en France* by Jean Ernoult

²⁰ *Règlement du Petit-Séminaire de Saint-Sauveur à Cellule*, Riom, 1877

²¹ ISR No. 298

²² *Ibid.* No. 126

²³ *Ibid.* No. 464

²⁴ BC Arch. 'Sorti' file

²⁵ Cellule reports 187/B/11 Gen. Arch

²⁶ Shanahan personal papers (SPP) Spiritan Gen Arch (BG XV p.701)

²⁷ BG XV (1889-1891) p.701

²⁸ ISR No.555; BG XVI 140

²⁹ Cellule reports 187/b/11 Gen. Arch.

³⁰ BG XXIX 550

³¹ BG XXVII (4) pp91ff;

³² SPP

³³ Cellule reports by Jalabert

³⁴ Ernoult, op. cit. p.355; *Père Leman*, Séán Farragher, Dublin, 1988, pp 71ff.

³⁵ ISR No. 219

³⁶ *Biographies* 1907, Le P. François-Xavier Libermann by A. Limbour; BG XVII pp 91ff

³⁷ BG XVI11 (V) pp 17ff

³⁸ Ernoult op. cit. 369f

³⁹ BG XXX111 pp 531ff; *A Spiritan Who was Who*, Henry Koren, No. 336; Memoire Spiritaire No. 7 pp55ff

⁴⁰ *Le R.P. Henri Van Haecke* by Maurice Briault p.46

⁴¹ Ernoult op.cit. p.365

⁴¹ Briault pp 40ff

⁴³ BG XVIII pp211ff, 42, 57f, XIX p.35

⁴⁴ SPP

⁴⁵ SPP

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Un Grand Missionnaire, Mgr Alexander Le Roy* by P. Henri Goré, Paris 1952

⁴⁹ SPP

⁵⁰ BG XXXII pp875ff

⁵¹ BG XV111 pp 251ff

⁵² *Vie du R.P. Grizard* by R.P. Joseph Janin CSSp, Maison Mère, Paris, 1941

⁵³ *Ibid.* pp.37ff

⁵⁴ Shanahan diary p.91f

⁵⁵ Grizard's notes on Shanahan, GenArch; Chevilly box

⁵⁶ *Led by the Spirit* by Séán Farragher, Dublin, 1992, p.54 et passim

⁵⁷ The Second Burial of Bishop Shanahan, Desmond Forristal, pp44ff

⁵⁸ Grizard report on Ireland cf. GenArch, Chevilly; Grizard file BCArch

⁵⁹ Shanahan's spiritual diary, HRSArch

⁶⁰ Later in life he will speak frequently about divinising what is human in one's life

A Spiritual Journal1897



A Spiritual Journal 1897

Over the years Shanahan was to treasure a little notebook (*calpin*) in which he bares his soul to God and Our Lady. Fortunately it has survived among his papers. On it he wrote: "I consider all that is contained in this notebook as 'secrets of confession'". And, though this written document is not really covered by the seal of confession in the theological sense of that word, one can understand why Fr Shanahan should have so described it to protect it from prying eyes during his lifetime. In it he is speaking not to human beings but direct to Almighty God and to Our Lady. Without hesitation he sees himself as a sinner striving with God's help to be a saint. As he gets to see his real self under the guidance of the Master of Novices' expert lectures he feels he can cry out with St Peter: "Depart from me O Lord for I am a sinful man." A thought that consoled Shanahan, as he tells us, is that Our Lord was tempted in all things as we are. If he had known St Patrick's Confession at the time he would have appreciated why the opening words read: "I am Patrick, a sinner..."

The minute script used by Shanahan may not have had as its purpose to make it more difficult for anyone but himself to peruse but it certainly must have helped to concentrate his own mind at the time. The opening page of Shanahan's spiritual diary is worth quoting as it puts us in the picture so to speak. At the top of the page we have the capital letters F.C.S., which stand for 'Fervour, Charity, Sacrifice' - words spoken by Fr Libermann as a guide for the members of his society as he lay dying; A.M.D.G. *Ad majorem Dei Gloriam* - 'For the greater Glory of God,' the motto of St Ignatius Loyola whom Shanahan had taken as his patron at Confirmation; and J.M.J, 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph.'

Having nailed his colours to the mast, as it were, he starts:

This notebook begun the First Friday of April will accompany me wherever I go. In moments of difficulty I will reread it. The memory of these happy days in the novitiate, a period of peace, happiness and prayer, will help to reanimate me. I will recall my good resolution, the splendid conferences which God arranged for me to hear through the mouth of his minister; the good example of all virtues given by my confreres.

As to why Shanahan decided at that stage of the novitiate to keep a spiritual journal we can't say for sure but it is most likely that the suggestion came from the Master of Novices, who wrote in his notes about Shanahan that he was a 'serious' candidate. From his expert knowledge as a director of souls he must have seen that Shanahan was the type who could profit from such an exercise.

Shanahan proceeds to name all his fellow novices individually, sixty-three in number, with many of whom he would be in close contact in later life and five of them being Irish. He then continues:

Recalling then how I once saw clearly the goal and the means to attain it, I will set myself to work with the same ardour as in the novitiate. I also want to become a good and valiant missionary. Neither the Congregation nor the heroic phalanx of apostles of which I am part, nor our King Jesus Christ will be ashamed of me. I beg this grace from you my divine Saviour in virtue of the precious blood you have already shed for me on calvary, through the

intercession of Mary, my good guardian angel and my holy patrons.

And lest we think that these are merely the outpourings of a novice with little real connection with later life in the active ministry, we anticipate the moment when thirty years later he accidentally reopened this little notebook. He wrote this time in a far more mature and open hand:

Friday 25 Nov 1927 Today I came across this little book. I look and read it. God bless our Venerable Master of Novices, Rev. Fr Grizard. Thirty years have elapsed since he formed his last group of novices, but the words that he spoke during the novitiate, the example he gave, the perfect instrument he was in the hands of God, have produced in every soul that listened to him, gave itself up to God through him, is the better for it today. To read over the few pages in which my own heart and soul were exposed with their failings of thirty years ago is to understand how wonderful was the director given to us. We were enabled to see ourselves guided as we were by the director, who in his turn was guided by God. We saw and understood ourselves as we were then, and what I am today. The life long struggle has gone on against the self-same failings and weaknesses.

Much of what Shanahan has written in his spiritual diary was inspired by the lectures ('conferences') given by Fr Grizard, but we are by no means left with an impersonal *résumé*. Far from it. Shanahan has made the thoughts thus distilled very much his own applying them from time to time to his own situation.

The first series of talks were on obedience in religious life. The approach to the topic reflects a former understanding of religious obedience, stressing very much the role of the superior as God's representative. It is obviously in the tradition of St Ignatius, and Shanahan, having taken the name Ignatius in Confirmation, naturally takes readily to St Ignatius' approach, summed up tersely as: "We serve either God or Satan." He goes on to outline the chain of authority from God to the individual through his superior, carrying out not merely the details of his orders but submitting one's judgement to him - secure in the belief that submitting one's judgement to that of the superior, even when he may be wrong, is doing God's will. Such obedience - giving all to God - is seen as a holocaust. He adds that he belongs to a congregation where abnegation of self is achieved mainly through obedience, and that abnegation of self was seen as a vital factor in the apostolate as expounded by Fr Libermann. That this does not mean a life of slavery is explained by the quotation from St Gregory: "To serve God is to reign." As for his own resolution for the future he writes:

Love will be the one driving force of my life. When one loves nothing costs. When one loves God how sweet is to accomplish his least desires. The man who studies good literature, the fine arts does so purely out of love. Ask him if the work costs him. And yet what trouble he has gone to. But the acquisition of the object of his researches - so empty in themselves - nevertheless will compensate him a thousand times for the trouble he has taken to acquire such a small possession. I too wish to succeed in possessing the very source of Beauty - God.

Apart from the fact that Shanahan in his life and his letters was seen to have a keen eye for beauty in all its forms, this reference to his personal wish to succeed in possessing the source of 'Beauty' - God - must have had a special significance in the light of his lengthy composition in his other notebook from this period - a mini-treatise on the nature of Beauty.

The great Liturgical feasts have always been at the centre of Christian

spirituality, so we are not surprised that they feature much in Shanahan's diary. Passiontide and Easter are at the heart of the liturgical year, so it is of interest to learn what reflections Shanahan recorded on these feasts. When he considers what Christ suffered for him as depicted in the Stations of the Cross he asks what should be his reaction. First, recognition of what Christ had suffered. Then the firm resolution to avoid sin and to accept in a spirit of patience whatever sufferings come his way. He is ashamed that his own reaction in prayer is so cold and indifferent. Then unexpectedly he lifts the veil on his struggle against his wayward nature:

It is long since I promised you O Divine Saviour to correct that fault which is the cause of all my falls and I have not yet done so. O Jesus I beg for the strength to resist this fault and to overcome it. I ask this through your so painful passion. Thanks for the worries that I have experienced in this matter. O Mary, My good angel, St Joseph, and my holy patron saints obtain for me that grace."

Then as part of the plan for each meditation he mentions his 'Resolution': "I will especially not voluntarily delay on any useless thought or other, and for that reason I will keep myself always occupied - Courage, energy, confidence.

Shanahan's next meditation is on Religious life. He thanks God for his almost miraculous intervention in bringing him to where he now finds himself. He is convinced that the congregation is especially suited to his needs. But his faults continue as revealed to him by the conferences of Fr Master: belittling confreres, preferring to go on recreation with the more pleasing confreres, fault-finding. He asks for the grace to overcome these faults and resolves never to speak evil about former superiors or confreres, and to go on recreation with a joyful heart.

The recurring references to his failures during recreation may sound puzzling to those unfamiliar with the rule of life in a seminary in those days. Silence reigned inside the building at all times where life consisted of study, common exercises - prayer, meals, work etc. But life is mainly about relationships and the only time the students came in real live contact with one another was when they met on their walks around the grounds or on 'promenades' i.e. communal long walks outside. The natural tendency was to choose the companions with which one got on well, but they were obliged by the rule to avoid this and to step in with the first to arrive on the scene. The main purpose of this rule was to accustom them early in life to accept all as equals in order to prepare them for the ministry. Also it was hoped to avoid unhelpful relationships or cliques based on common tastes and attitudes which could foster critical attitudes to other confreres and even to those in authority. There was little else they could talk about, as they had practically no contact with life outside the seminary. There were no competitive games for them to work off their pent-up energies, so there was the tendency to debate robustly matters discussed at lectures etc. Personal antipathies naturally surfaced from time to time. At this stage Shanahan did not find it easy to adapt to all his confreres but, in the spirit of the novitiate as a time to weed out one's faults in view of future life as priest and missionary, he strives hard to overcome this shortcoming.

For the Feast of the Sorrows of Our Lady he recalls the words of Jesus. "Woman behold your son," and comments "And what an exchange for her own son!" As he confesses his part in adding to her sufferings by giving heed to the voice of the demon and his own passions, he adds: "You love me in spite of my faults. Obtain for me the grace of perseverance in my vocation, that I may be a good missionary. To that end obtain for me the grace to overcome my great dominant passion which I don't have to mention by name to you." Resolution: "Compunction; courage and

cheerfulness."

There follows a section entitled 'My Direction', which most probably refers to his periodic in-depth interview with the Director. Under the heading 'Dominant fault' he has this comment: "Many times tempted; almost every time, thanks to the grace of God, I have succeeded in repelling the temptation. I have carried out two or three times the small mortifications or rather avoiding unmortifications I had resolved to undertake. During free recreation periods as far as it depends on me I will chose to be with confreres for whom I have the least attraction. Other fault: Self-love. It appears that I have yet a good dose of that. During these 15 (25?) days I don't think that I have voluntarily delayed over thoughts of that nature." As he reviews his Piety and Prayer (meditation or mental prayer, that is) he is fairly happy with his progress. He then prays to God as usual through the intercession of Our Lady, his guardian angel and patron saints, that he persevere and become more perfect each day so as to become a good missionary. Resolution: "I must keep a careful watch over myself in Springtime. I am given to dissipation."

Palm Sunday causes him to reflect on his own coldness in prayer. As he meditates on the events of that day in the life of Jesus, he finds himself as cold as ice, but of course not really indifferent; he wants to be humble like Jesus in his Passion and ready to bear with his own crosses. He is convinced that the Lord will never abandon him and that in spite of all his faults that he will make of him a good missionary through the intercession of BVM and his patrons.

Simple but sincere reflections, conscious of his faults, eager to improve - and all in order to be a good missionary. This, the main aim of the novitiate as conducted over the years by Fr Grizard, Shanahan has made very much his own concern.

For each day of Holy Week he has a page - some twenty-five lines - of colloquy direct with the Lord based on the events of Christ's Passion and death, simple but very personal reflections on what Christ did for love of him and what little he has done in return, but with resolutions to try to overcome his failings, bear patiently the crosses that come his way and pay greater attention to the preparation of the subject for Prayer.. For example he has these lines for Tuesday of Holy Week: "Christ totally submitting to God's will, no word of complaint. What should I do? Try to become more serious than I am, take more care in preparing for Prayer, be indifferent on recreation as regards my companions, and, in face of all suffering I may have to bear, to help me to do all that may I think on Calvary." All quotations from Sacred Scripture are in the Latin Vulgate, which because of their use in the Liturgy and spiritual writings at that time were very familiar and were redolent with the rich tradition of devotional reflection in a way that perhaps the more accurate vernacular versions can never match.

For Spy Wednesday he writes: "Jesus I wish to love you with all my heart, to offer you my compassion. But to do this I need your grace to resist courageously against the temptations sent by the demon. I beg this in virtue of the love which made you die for me 1900 years ago..."

His reflections on the Washing of the Feet on Holy Thursday are directed to the priesthood towards which he looks forward eagerly: "The humility of Jesus washing the feet of the apostles. What respect for those soon to be ordained priests - his representatives through the ages and peoples. What esteem I should have for this favour of the priesthood, which will be conferred on me very soon. Jesus Christ did not hesitate to go on his knees to his priests. What purity one must have then." As he prays for the graces he needs for that vocation he realises that he must pray not merely for himself but for all his confreres and for all who will receive Christ in Holy

Communion. He takes up this theme again for Good Friday when he is reflecting on his own part in the Passion of Christ: "Pardon for our part in your sufferings. First for all my sins: lack of zeal in trying to correct in myself the faults least compatible with my vocation, lack of energy, of inconstancy, my inclination to satisfy myself in all things – praying with little fervour. Pardon also for my confreres in the novitiate, for the Congregation, for the Church. Remember you died 1900 years ago for us all, and for the poor Blacks, especially those evangelised by our congregation, and for all who have not known you but who wish to know you. For this day receive my homage and that of all who have never known you or prayed."

Again for Easter Saturday he rejoices that Christ once in heaven will ever have his arms outstretched to protect him from this and that temptation because of what he suffered for him. He then thinks of all the others Christ loves. "I pray for the other novices, for the virtues they will need as missionaries - love of God without reserve, abnegation, generosity, fervour, charity, faith, purity, perseverance.." And reminding us once again how important a training ground was the recreation period he writes his Resolution as result of his reflections: "I will be indifferent on recreation."

On Easter Sunday he rejoices 'with the whole church, triumphant, militant together with the celestial hosts' in celebrating the Resurrection of Christ. He says he looks forward to participating in Christ's immortality in his own very body. What matters whether his life here on earth is to be short or long. But he adds that he hopes to serve in Africa!

Easter Tuesday. These were days of relative relaxation with added time for outdoor recreation, but in Fr Grizard's plans there could be surprise changes of plans to prepare them for such eventualities in later life. Shanahan refers to Christ's farewell gift of peace but feeling far from at peace with himself he asks what are the enemies of that peace which calms all passions. He answers: "attachment to creatures and the resultant dependence on events as they happen." They were all wound up for an outing to Paris -on foot - to visit the great shrines of Montmartre and Our Lady of Victories when at the last moment the regulation was changed to manual labour for the day. He says: "I scarcely made my Prayer as a result. His Resolution is given as: "I will accept as joyously as I can the regulation the Superior will fix for us today. I will repress in me the first impressions which produce in me such feelings of disappointment."

For the next day he writes that he had spent a happy day in spite of the disappointment. "So in future I will not be at the mercy of events - happy or otherwise."

The postponed outing took place on Friday, 23 April. He writes that he was delighted with their visit to the great shrine of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre. He asks the Lord to remember the special prayers he made before the Blessed Sacrament exposed there. (Three years later to the day Shanahan would have the great happiness of saying his first mass on 23 April 1900)

In his reflections on the final words of Christ to his apostles: "All power in heaven and on earth is given to me: Go teach all nations.." he applies these words to himself being now called to share in the great power of Christ. He reflects on the responsibility this vocation imposes on him to be holy and "in so far as it depends on me to have the virtues of purity, humility and gentleness.." Resolution: "In moments of difficulty to remember that Jesus Christ is with me, and that the salvation of a great number depends on my fidelity."

He might legitimately have felt that by this stage he was well on the road to having coped with his failings, but the words of the *Miserere* psalm stirred his

conscience, i.e. "My sin is always before me" He writes: "Is there a fault in my life that I have not sincerely repented? From now on I must search out to see if anything is not recognised as evil. But regretting the past is not enough. In the present and the future I must commence seriously to serve God. I know I will fail, but not voluntarily. O God I beg for the grace to triumph over my dominant fault - source of all my defects."

Next day he meditated on the theme of his defects especially during recreation and his findings must have come as a shock to himself. During recreation – in discussions overbearing, holding on to his own opinions even when he knows little about the subject. Yet abrasively arguing his point of view; his method of discussing showing disdain for the opinions of others. In his efforts at being witty - at times at the expense of others - many of his confreres are hurt in their feelings. He thus makes himself insupportable. People don't hesitate to call him a liar. He is known to have a penchant for launching new views even false ones.

All this is so much at variance with what is known about Shanahan later that if it were written by someone else it would be rejected as unfounded. But this is Shanahan speaking before God and not trying to paint a picture for the sake of effect. He prays: "Mary help me to get rid of my faults. May I have more respect for the dear members of Christ – those he loves so much. Resolution: 'Put in practice the opposite virtue to my identified faults, without discouraging myself.'"

Shanahan at this stage seems to have uncovered a veritable can of worms in his relations with his confreres, and he could easily have been discouraged at the prospect of the hill to be climbed to get away from his perceived defects. But there was more to come. His next entry reads: "Bad effects of too exterior joy and sorrow. Exterior joys, levity on recreation and walks, loud laughter, conversation about unsuitable topics - being too naturalistic - all undermines a taste for serious matters - reading, meditation. I must be more on my guard."

A possible explanation of why Shanahan became so conscious at this stage of his failings in his dealings with his confreres on recreation may be found in the notes he was transcribing into his special notebook on how one should conduct oneself in conversation etc. On page 78 he writes:

One must always be in harmony with oneself and show that constancy even in conversation. The words must be simple and not smack of affectation. One must be friendly, gentle, affectionate, modest, but also prudent and clear-headed. Having an open, obliging mien, and with a countenance that shows a desire to welcome all with kindness, showing a readiness to listen to what others are saying. Not to be in too much of a hurry to respond but to respond as fits. Each person be allowed his turn to speak. One must never impose oneself or exploit matters for one's own profit. If you want to please all set out not to show off your wit but try to let others see that they also count for much. Try to lead them prudently to speak of matters in which they are interested and about which they may be better informed.

This was the ideal and Joseph was soon to realise that he was far from living up to it in practice.

Fr Grizard gave a talk on those whom he had known over the years who had quitted their vocation and had come to grief in one way or another. He listed the causes of their defection as Pride, Sensuality, lack of Piety, lack of openness. Shanahan finds that he has all these faults himself, especially sensuality of heart. He prays for the grace of final perseverance, but admits that it would be better not to be a priest at all than to be a bad one. His Resolution is that when he finds himself tempted

to any of these faults mentioned he must say: "There is the devil trying to drag me down to hell."

When he tries to come to grips with the cause of his lack of success at Mental Prayer he feels that it is attachment to created things. He reflects that during the day he is often just amusing himself and not making a serious effort to live in the presence of God. He resolves to be more recollected, to keep more guard of his imagination, and above all to write out the subject of his mental prayer as he had often promised his Director but had failed to do so.

For the first day of May - the month of Mary as he remarks - he has a very personal reflection. May had always been a special month for him in the past. He thanks Mary for special favours but has to admit that the struggle still goes on and he feels it will be always so. He admits that with the years his passions seem to have increased in power. He lists as his special enemies - sensuality of heart, pride, and inconstancy. He thanks God that he has made some progress but adds "Mary you know where I stand and how far I am from having acquired the virtues necessary for a good religious much less a priest. But I count on you, and in spite of the hardness of the struggle I do not despair. Nobody invokes you in vain and, apart from being my mother, remember the special conditions in which I always find myself, and as 'Joseph' I have a special claim on your care. I must not allow myself to be shaken by anything, my imagination and my susceptibility. Resolution: "During the month of May to watch out well for purity. Increase in me that beautiful virtue."

The big retreat

The part of the novitiate recalled most clearly in later life by the novices was the special eight-day retreat given by Fr Grizard during which there was total silence. Shanahan gives it generous space in his diary. But though most of what he has to say is suggested by the lectures given by Grizard, Shanahan makes it very much his own, and from time to time makes it personal, applying it to himself. Naturally the material of these lectures was the main truths of the faith. The first lecture points out that before great events in his life Christ prayed at length, and as the priest shares in the mission of Christ the novitiate in preparation for profession had a special role. And just as Christ, though sinless, shared in the sufferings and worries of human life so must the priest be ready to assume that role. The fundamental truth stressed in the opening lectures was that as God can only act for his own glory what matters most in what happens to us is that the glory of God is achieved. Finding satisfaction in mere created goals will leave the heart empty. Shanahan had written in capitals at the start of his diary the letters A.M.D.G. 'To the greater glory of God' – so he warmed to the fuller exposition of this theme given by the Director. For 3 May, the Feast of St Augustine, he writes: "You have made us for yourself O Lord and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee. How true. I am now 26 and the things that have given me most pleasure, games, walks, soirées etc., what remains of them now?Nothing was done especially for God. O God you have created me great but I am small. And is there yet some imperfect thing that I prefer to you? Resolution. 'Not to waste energy in useless words or thoughts. To try to achieve balance of character. Again God has given us the means; the grace to choose the Good and the Beautiful, grace to supernaturalise the present moment and the ordinary things of life. We are given the instruments by God, the vehicle in which we are to travel to him; we are in charge not the vehicle."

As he tries to apply these general truths to himself he writes "All things are included in this plan - our humiliations, my sensitiveness, my enjoyment of things,

self esteem - the most difficult thing for me. So when humiliations come at chapter or recreation I am not to object." Resolution: 'To be indifferent during recreation and promenades.'" Later he writes: "God should have the first place in my relations with creatures. Events, good weather, unhappy experiences, an agreeable function or otherwise, being professed or not, continue with studies or not, health or to be sent to a college to teach - is useful for me or not, agreeable. Nothing about God's glory! A worldly spirit pervades all. Is there any creature I love for its own sake, or is it always for myself. My actions are for success and approval. My function a waste of time? Or do I think first of the glory of God involved? The rights of man not the rights of God. The opinions of men, human approval...Christ did not look for human acclaim for the good things he did, not even for the miracles. He asked for silence. But I want approval for all here below. Christ in the temple and on the cross caused suffering to his mother, but his Father's work was his priority. "My mother, my brothers are those who do the will of God.." Resolution: "I must mortify myself in my human affections."

Feast of St Monica, 6th conference. Having reflected on the influence of Monica on her husband and her son he surprisingly lifts the veil on himself. "After reading the penitential psalms I resolved to make a good confession. Why I don't know. I promised Our Lady to go and reveal to Fr Master some affair, which troubled me very much. What a painful moment! But it is done. O Mary thank you, thank you. How happy I am that I kept my promise. I know you will keep yours. I will make a good general confession. The rest of my novitiate will be happy. May the memory of that grace never leave my heart.."

The conference best remembered in later life by the novices was the one with the theme *Magister meus unicus* - 'My one Master - Jesus Christ'. We find echoes of this theme in these notes. Christ is the model for all but in particular for religious and priests, who are to be his elite, ready to suffer heroically when called on. If offered the choice of a short or long life it must be long in order to suffer more for his glory. The conference on religious obedience is seen in the light of renouncing all for Christ. But one is seen as a religious for one's own salvation; the priesthood adds a further motive for holiness, namely the salvation of others.

The following considerations about the role of the priesthood will help to appreciate Shanahan's own concept of the priestly office as he looked forward to his ordination. Here more than for any other topic Shanahan quotes freely from the Scriptures in Latin as if he had the words by heart. 'The priest shares in the ministry given to Christ by his Father. A ministry of reconciliation – sharing in Christ's power to forgive sins; a ministry of truth – teaching in the name of Christ; a ministry of reparation and homage on behalf of the church and the people, and God passes through the priest to people. (Later in life he will often remind his Missionary Sisters that they also are "consecrated instruments of God.")

When he comes to reflections on the Eucharist he realises that though all ages would not be long enough to prepare for the priesthood he longs for ordination as he feels he is 'urged by the love of Christ' himself. So he resolves that henceforth all his life will be a preparation for the priesthood. His reflections on Christ in the tabernacle are coloured by the devotional approach based on the theme that Christ is the prisoner of the tabernacle. Several times he comes back to the importance of preparing to meet the Lord in a special way in Holy Communion.

He sees the priest as being in the forefront of the battle - the Legion of honour. Who is the enemy? First the demon. Then the flesh. "My own dominant fault and an incredible self-love which becomes offended at the least provocation."

Rounding off his reflections on the priesthood he feels that he has a triple obligation to be holy - as a religious, a priest and a missionary. Resolution: "I must constantly seriously strive to be a saint but with confidence and without undue worry."

Fr Grizard's 15th conference was on temptations and their part in God's plan. Christ himself was tempted. So were the apostles; he names Peter and Paul. So were the saints: he gives examples from the lives of Saints Francis and Catherine of Sienna. Lucifer refused to accept Christ and now he attacks him in us. How does he act? Sometimes like a lion; more often through our temperament in small matters, through the elements, through sorrow, sadness, depression, not being able to think or desire anything...

And why does God allow us to be tempted? To test our mettle, increase our merits. Temptation is the battlefield where we defeat the devil. Fr Grizard told them that the novices or priests most to be pitied are those who have arrived at their goal without having to come through temptation; the man who has been severely tested is the man you can rely on.

His closing words about the retreat are: "Fervour, Charity, Sacrifice. End of the eight day retreat. Perhaps the finest in my life. Not a moment of boredom. And the grace from Mary to make a good general confession. I kept my promise and Mary kept hers. Yesterday at 9.30 I confessed to Fr Master. Never was I so happy. Prepare well for Holy Communion and Thanksgiving". His plan: "Love of God and my neighbour. Fervour in the service of God; sacrifice of all my pleasures and generous acceptance of difficulties, pains and temptations. Resolution: "To do well my mental prayer and my other exercises of piety."

Though Fr Grizard had not known Fr Libermann personally he was rated the best expert on Libermann's teaching. Several volumes of Libermann's letters had been published to date, so the students had access to Libermann's writings. Special prominence was given to Libermann's teaching on what he referred to as 'practical union' with God. A number of Grizard's lectures treat of this topic as we can see from Shanahan's notes under the titles practical faith and living in the presence of God. He states that this practical faith will help him overcome his laziness and inconstancy and not be discouraged by the difficulties presented by his passions. "So few of my actions are inspired by faith, I must try to supernaturalise my various actions."¹ And when Fr Grizard encouraged them to keep a bouquet as it were of the retreat he suggested the following topics: a) Renunciation as explained. b) Practical union with God recalling the Lord's word: "He who abides in me I will abide in him." c) Sanctifying grace and all it means. d) Habitual union. One offers all to God from time to time during the day, renewed again. e) Actual union when special events occur.

Fine in theory; but next day he has to report about his own failure to live up to the ideal: "Often in my work I am not sufficiently supernatural. Even in my prayer I lose the presence of God. In my relations with my confreres I seek the agreeable and avoid what is painful. The little humiliations that come my way find me poorly prepared." Resolution: "I will offer to the Lord the annoyances I suffer in relation to my confreres." And again he has to report: "God is always with us but we are not with God. Nonchalance, indifference, distractions at prayer, allowing my imagination free rein."

As he reflects on the hymn to the Holy Spirit (*Veni Sancte Spiritus*) said in common at Morning Prayer everyday he says that we badly need the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to see what is good and what is not. "Often it is my own sweet will that is my guide. I am inclined to act under the impression of the moment and it takes little to

impress me for good or for ill. I need the guidance of the Holy Spirit or pride will lead me with the love of pleasure and ease...I must be on the watch as my dominant fault causes me to act with less frankness in certain circumstances. Always the truth on my lips as well as in my heart. Holy Spirit with your light save me from the demon who knows me better than I know myself. Make me a good missionary, courageous, generous. When I judge myself or others I must ask is it by the light of the Holy Spirit that I judge”

As he continues to reflect on the role of the Spirit in the run up to Pentecost he writes:

The Ven. Libermann teaches that the missionary worthy of the name must be a man of absolute renouncement. His priority must be the interests of the poor Blacks. The more empty of creature attachments the more full of God. Not listening to the calls of the flesh but acting as a good soldier of Christ. Resolution: Once more it is: “On recreation and walks avoid self seeking; go with the first to arrive”.

For May he has further thoughts on the relation between his life now and his ministry later: “One must have love and esteem for one’s vocation. Otherwise there is danger for himself and for others. He will criticise others and the congregation. I must examine my own attitude, avoid all criticism of my confreres, consider the disastrous consequences for my ordination if I am not well prepared; avoid people who have no love for their vocation.” Resolution: “To be watchful of my conversation at recreation.”

Then as he sees the novitiate coming to an end he recalls the Lord’s words to his disciples: “You have not asked for anything up till now.” He now lists his priorities as follows:

First the grace of final perseverance for myself

Nearest priority – the grace to make a good profession and be a good religious As far as possible for a human being to be ready for the priesthood, especially the grace of purity, charity, obedience, total renouncement of myself and the world, generosity and constancy in combating my passions

I ask for the same graces for all the novices here and forever in the congregation, but especially for those of the 2nd novitiate (Namely the one of the three groups in which he finds himself).

I ask for them and myself the grace to be good, zealous, holy, valiant missionaries. For that, grant, if it is your holy will, health of body and all the spiritual gifts necessary

For the sake of the Blacks that I and the confreres will evangelise – that we be faithful to the inspirations – that we do not fail

I ask for a special blessing for the Congregation, the Pope, the Church, for my parents, brothers and sisters

Finally, pardon all my sins and negligences

O Mary, my patrons, obtain for me that I be heard.

Down to earth next day he writes: “I must be on the watch against sensuality in eating and drinking. Especially drink; it goes fast to my head. That could be a problem for me on the missions and colonies or elsewhere – if I give way to that inclination.” Resolution: “In reference to drink: I must drink only my own portion.” One must remember that wine was normally served for lunch, albeit a diluted version. And for the Feast of the Ascension he is still kept very much down to earth. “Poor meditation. Distracted as often happens. How God can put up with me and call me to a sublime vocation with all the many passions that I fail to control – lack of humility. All I can do is humble myself in your presence and ask for pardon for all my sins.

Give me the courage to bear with my passions; this day of joy in heaven forget not your poor child. I would not deliberately cause you pain." Resolution: "That I do not lose courage because of my faults and that I try to avoid situations in which I have failed."

For the Feast of the Mission of the Apostles he comments: "Jesus Christ is sending us as he sent the Apostles. We have to fulfil the same mission and be saints as were the Apostles the same mission as Jesus Christ who came to send fire on the earth. Innumerable graces which we have to distribute. That is our vocation."

Veni Sancti Spiritus -Veni Pater pauperum Come thou Father of the poor. I am so poor in spiritual goods. How many virtues I lack. O Holy Spirit give me the spiritual goods I need – chastity, obedience, abnegation and a truly priestly soul – that I may not be too attached to the affections of this world. You alone should be the object of my love." Resolution: "To mortify myself in not seeking the company of the confreres I prefer."

For 31 May he writes: "May almost finished. I have obtained some special graces beginning with my dominant fault which has much less force. I beg Mary the grace to finish the year well and make a good profession; that I may make a good month of the Sacred Heart (June). My sermon takes up all my time but I will be finished next Saturday. I put it under your protection. It takes place on the vigil of my baptism. I will be 26 years of age."

'My sermon' refers to the custom of the novice priests in the novitiate in the past having to preach their first public sermon – the audience being not a sympathetic public congregation but a rather critical group of his peers and professors. It was an ordeal that many dreaded - and that in spite of having been given much theoretical tuition on how best to preach. Shanahan in his special notebook has a detailed summary of such tuition. The title is Eloquence and the matter deals with the nature and object of eloquence in general with detailed advice on such matters as voice control, use of gestures, of emotion, imagination, logical argument etc. All this is applied to Sacred Eloquence which, because of its object and matter, is rated the supreme exercise of eloquence. If rules and definitions could produce orators then a generation of Bossuets could be expected.

Shanahan himself would one day be seen by others as a brilliant public speaker when addressing groups of mission helpers. His own comment on his first performance is highly critical: "My first sermon was a complete flop. May the name of God be blessed. From now on I will bear humiliations more readily. "It is good to have failed all round. For the past 15 days my spiritual exercises have been a failure I was convinced myself of the truth of what I had intended to develop for my listeners. May the Sacred Heart bless me encourage me to persevere and in spite of my unworthiness enfold me in a little corner of his Sacred and all adorable Heart."

Next morning, still suffering from his humiliating experience he writes: "Prayer not done well this morning: occupied with everything but God. But one idea came to me: I must be more indifferent to the judgement of people than I have been. If I make foolish mistakes then I must have the courage to put up with them. No matter how people judge me I am the same in God's eyes. Certain faults I must avoid in my conversation. (a) not to speak of myself either good or bad (b) to be natural in my thoughts and manner of expressing them: I am using superlatives. I continually say: 'Splendid', 'Dreadful' etc. (c) I must be careful of charity. O Mary obtain for me from the Heart of Jesus, purity of heart, patience and perseverance."

At times things must get worse before they get better. So it was for Shanahan. Next day he had to confess: "Yesterday I failed on all counts. I talked too much with

no control over my words. The first thought that came I blurted it out hastening to make it known. It mattered little that there was no logic of thought. Due to this manner of acting I often say things that I should not. How often have I hurt one confrere or another. In future I will force myself to make it seem that it is they who are witty and not I. I will speak as little as possible especially of what concerns me. When someone starts a subject I will not try to turn it. The good God has allowed that the past has been for my shame. The future depends on me in all cases. May his name be blessed.

A bit better, but another thing: I was not able to take a humiliation which came some days ago. I find myself too often with the same companions. Even though much humiliated and pained I won no merit from it. During recreation I excused myself putting the blame clearly on all but myself – not what Our Saviour did even though he was innocent. Not the way my confreres act. O Sacred Heart pardon me. Mary console me and give me strength. At recreation to go with all the confreres and try to be happy and cheerful as far as it depends on me. Especially avoid criticising, and rid myself of that dreadful habit of laughing at all things and frequently. Resolution: “To bear in silence and with no excuses all the disagreeable things that can be said about me. ..O Sacred Heart grant me the graces of gentleness, charity, purity, through the intercession of Mary, my good angel and patrons.”

29 June Peter and Paul “Seven years ago I got the soutane. How many graces I have received since but was not faithful to them. Holy Apostles obtain for me in spite of my unworthiness to have a soul totally apostolic, - fervour, generosity and charity.” Visitation of Blessed Virgin – the First Friday of July. “Mary Mother of God went to great trouble to visit her cousin; a great lesson in humility for me. So when people say even the most stupid things about me it will help to make up for my sins; the courage to face up to the truth. Repress my own will and impressionability, I am so susceptible..

I must see all as the will of the good God and with that idea always in my mind I will be spared much worry and have the blessing of God to be a good religious and a good missionary”.

4 July “First day of vacation. Profession in two months. I ask for fidelity, constant generosity. My model: “He did not please himself but God; and when faced with small privations I will bear them”.

6 July Pilgrimage to Montmartre and Our Lady of Victories

7 July “Pitiful effort at prayer. I am doing nothing well recently. I had a fairly good opinion of myself. I am forced to change that. I am a nothing. Jesus pardon me; Mary obtain for me the grace to be always faithful to my vocation and duties. St Joseph I belong to you in a special way.”

“Death For some days we are working in the cemetery. It is there one sees what we are. The clay covering Fr Reffé, Mgr Duboin, is so hard that one can barely move it with the shovel. More disturbing - one sees with horror the bones the clay covers and a few years ago they were in full health. They thought as little about death perhaps as I do now.” Resolution: “ To continue to pray for the dead, and as I rise and go to bed to remind myself that I must die.” (Shanahan had known Fr Reffé, the renowned Dan of Studies at Blackrock, when Reffé returned ill from Australia. He had preached the school retreat in Cellule in 1890).

Under the title Resignation he has these thoughts:

For some time I have often failed in charity. I have certainly taken resolutions to pay attention to this matter but I have failed all the same. Every thing annoys me. I can put up with nothing not even my own faults.

I must realise that I can't work on my own. I need the good God. Perhaps I don't think enough about that. Two other things which easily upset me: 1) Confreres who appear to want to know everything about everybody. 2) Then there is the Submaster of Novices (Fr John O'Gorman); about him in particular I must make a sort of effort never to mention his name and to keep a rigorous silence when anyone speaks of him. But with all that I am not discreet and I say what is good or bad and to every one all that passes through my head. O Mary my I triumph over my faults. Resolution: "I will offer Holy Communion for the people I don't like, and will offer it for the intentions of the souls in purgatory."

(He gives no clue as to why he resolves not to speak about Fr O'Gorman in future. It is probable that because he knew him well in Langonnet, because he was so brilliant and was Irish, Shanahan may have been seen by the French students to have spoken about him too frequently. Shanahan and O'Gorman were to be life long friends).

Under "Thoughts suggested by the funerals to the cemetery of Frs Leclerc and Brunnetti" he has these comments

One day I will be so carried. When and where? Then people will cease to talk about me. That is human life. Then what will it matter to have been happy, without worries, well thought of by all, then in an instant one must leave all. How important it is before arriving at this terrible passage on which depends eternity and be prepared for it by a holy life, a life of prayer, mortification, humility... O my God grant me the grace to have always before my eyes in difficult moments the thought of death. Resolution: 'I will continue to recite the act of contrition before going to sleep.'

Why do I allow myself to be disturbed by the smallest difficulties. Nothing that happens to me can happen without being allowed by the preceptive or permissive will of God. Then what is the use of tormenting myself trying to have things happen as suits me? So often during the day and in particular in times of suffering I will fortify myself with this consoling thought: God wills it and he wills it for my greater good.

I often complain that I have great faults and that I am not able to overcome them as I would like. Certainly I am capable of negligence, of nonchalance, but really God does not allow me to triumph so as to make me realise the misery of the human state and to show me how I should be merciful to other people because it is good for me. Therefore have courage under the protecting gaze of God fighting courageously against my dominant fault. Resolution: I will try in a manner to aim at having a balanced temperament. To accustom myself not to speak under the impression of the moment. When I am dying to recount a particular incident I will not do it.

I think that I behaved myself fairly well yesterday as regards that virtue. Nevertheless I am worried again. I am given to judging confreres, and especially to blaming them. Then I am one of those who can't bear to be so judged. My confreres are in the same boat so why judge them? The good God wants me to love them as Jesus Christ loves me. So today I will submit completely to that divine command. I will not speak at all of my confreres. I will not entertain any thought contrary to charity. ...I will pay attention to that especially during recreation. Before speaking about any matter to reflect well. That is the grace that I will ask for in Holy Communion just now."

First Friday of August.

Today is the last (one day) retreat of the novitiate properly so called. I have to reproach myself of many infidelities. I sincerely ask pardon of God. I sincerely regret not having done a better novitiate for not having conquered my passions and not having acquired the virtues necessary for one called to so sublime a vocation.

The conference given by Fr Master had as object:

The spirit of faith in small matters. Man is led by two principles: faith and reason. These two are not mutually exclusive but generally reason is obscured by the passions, and Faith also by the same. Reason judges things according to the advantages they bring, the greater the advantages the more important is the act. According to Faith it is diametrically the opposite because it judges things from a different perspective. Its priority is heaven; its code of honour is sanctity."

Practice "Euge serve bona et fidelis.. 'Well done thou good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in small things; enter into the joy of the Lord.' 'Jesus Christ means by that that the great benefits of heaven and its delights are obtained by small things. "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God." Consequently it matters little if in the eyes of people that the acts that I do are of little importance. Indifference about the judgement of people.

We are called by God to a triple vocation where we must do well the small things, especially the details of the rule. I must never consider as small the thing which embellishes my soul and gives me heaven. I have not sufficient spirit of faith. During the vacation I will be continually faced with the choice of duty or a natural satisfaction diametrically opposed. So I must never say. 'This is not an important matter, or worse I won't be seen.'

Lives of the Saints. The Blessed Virgin and St Joseph. What did they ever do in comparison with Governors, Captains etc. of their time? And Our Venerable Father – he was considered a poor fool, a silly person that one supported out of pity.

Resolution: "May the members of the Congregation never forget their origins. Not the spirit of the world. Have a good and joyful vacation while at the same time doing my duty."

This is the last entry made by Shanahan in his spiritual diary until six years had elapsed. The intervening years were to be so demanding and different from what he had been accustomed to that he might not have been in tune with keeping such an account of his inner thoughts. Life had so changed by the time he next opened this notebook that one is interested in what was his reaction was. In general he felt that while life had changed he had not; that as he had quoted already: 'Man's life is a warfare' and that warfare, mostly with his own faults, still went on. But he has much to thank God for, and he was still aiming at the goals set during the novitiate. Significantly he no longer writes in French.

Onitsha 5 Oct. 1903

Read this last little note of the last happy days of my novitiate during a short stay in Onitsha town, 5 October, six years after the novitiate.

Thanks be to you, my God, for having preserved me up to this in your holy Apostolic Congregation

Thanks for having been so good as to send me to Africa
May your holy name be blessed and praised for all eternity
May your will be fulfilled in me as in all things
May my heart never wander from you
May I never neglect spending every atom of my energy, mental and physical, in saving those souls you love so much, because so unhappy
Ah! Deus meus et omnia, when the outlines of the everlasting hills appear on the horizon of Eternity, may it be my happy lot at last to see you and love you for all eternity. Then at last I cannot sin and I cannot stray away from you.
Then at this seeing you "*facie ad faciem*" won't I join with the angels' choirs singing with joyful heart: "*Gloria in excelsis Deo*" *Hosanna in excelsis, Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto, sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper et in saecula saeculorum.*
Amen"

June 27 1904

Once again my eyes have caught sight of the foregoing pages. How happy to think of old and happy days! How painful to realise I'm so little changed for the better since the days of my novitiate - on I stumble, carrying so so my cross, always in the company of the same evil defects that long ago should have been banished from my heart. It is now fifteen years since I received the habit, since I was on retreat in Cellule. My God though I have not improved, yet as in those happy days I rush to say to you with great energy of heart and soul "*Deus meus et omnia*." Forgive an old sinner. Don't remember his iniquities, grant him the grace to be something better, never to offend you mortally, the grace to do something for your honour and glory. The grace to die in your divine service, under the shadow of your sacred banner, the cross of my Lord and master. The favour of dying here in this foreign land - forgotten by all save you and my good mother Mary. O When will the day come when I cannot again offend you. - the everlasting day in the Mansions of my Father. Welcome suffering, sorrows, humiliation - provided that one day I can see you face to face and sing with your angels and saints the endless hymn of joy "*Gloria in excelsis Deo*."

18th May 1905

By chance this little notebook has come into my hands for the third time during this my third year in Africa. Now I am in Dekina, N.Nigeria. God grant me courage, patience, unlimited confidence in Divine Providence, the true spirit of prayer and charity to be able to do my work, to never forget asking from Heaven the necessary help to perform my duties.

Grant me also, my God a spirit of true acceptance of my sins, may I never forget I have offended and have consequently to do penance. There's no day so long that has not a night. Death and eternity are the night which any day may come to shut out forever the sun of life.

Mary, my good Mother, grant that I may ever be ready to appear with clean heart and soul before the judgement seat of the Unerring Judge. Plead my cause for me, good Mother. If I have penance to do beyond, well, God's Holy Will be done. That will also finish some day and then Heaven forever.

To God alone be honour, praise and glory from every creature the whole world over to the end of time.

Dekina, May 1908

Greater storms still were ahead of me, but all, all was my own absolute fault. Had I been a good religious and priest I would have been a saint. I have been a complete failure in the hands of God! But I hope to be saved, relying on his great mercy.

Annual Retreat, 3rd - to 10 January, 1909 at Onitsha;

Preached, by Fr. Xavier Lichtenberger.

Were present

Fr Xavier Lichtenberger, Fr Joseph Lichtenberger, Fr Vogler, Fr Bisch, Fr Ward, Fr Duhaze, Fr Douvry, Fr Bindel, Fr Feral, Fr Shanahan.

On this 6th day of January I once again happened to take up this little notebook. With aching heart I read over what I wrote on three previous occasions. Strange, is it not that each record seems not only to confirm the former one, but to add to the darkness of the picture? Instead of holiness being the keynote, it is sin, and the habit of sin that dominates. My God how long is that to last?

Will I ever improve? If I don't what will the end be? ...Sorrow and sin go hand in hand. Without sin there is no sorrow. Tears shed for any other cause than sin are not tears - always excepting tears shed in gratitude and love in return for God's mercy and love. What harm if tears could be shed for sin? But no! As years glide on after years into the unrecalled past, it looks as if the heart grows harder the eyes more dim, the conscience less pervious to heavenly emotion and holy inspiration. Rather die, oh! rather death a thousand times than continue in this strain. The heart must vibrate with purer music or it will be crushed, by the anger of an outraged God.

Forgive me, my God, I am really sorry, more sorry than words can express, more sorry than years and tears can ever suffice to tell Thee, Oh, I do promise once again to do my best, to lead a pure and good life, to take suffering as it comes in atonement for any delinquencies.

Once more I vow the vows made years ago in Your sacred Presence, vows I will never recall. My unfaithfulness is not that of the reasoned out insulter, yet it cannot be condoned. Have pity on the anguish seen and thought, the thought of having offended. You bring into my heart. Keep that anguish over there as long as I live. Send me sufferings and crosses, anything and everything but keep me from offending Thee. Blessed Mary, my Mother, blessed Joseph my good

Father and Protector, pray for me, obtain pardon for me, obtain tears and repentance for my heart, strength for my heart, health for body and soul. These not for myself but for the cause and honour of the great Master whose servant I am, whose priest I am and whose repentant and loving child I ever wish to be in this life and in the next. *Deus in adjutorium meum intende. Domine ad adjuvandum me festina!*

6 Jan 1919 J Shanahan

The war came and went since I wrote these last lines - five of the ten priests are gone to their reward ..There are still in Nigeria in America. (sic)

I consider the chance - no not chance the finding of this notebook a special grace bestowed on me by my most merciful Redeemer, My Jesus I thank You

for the never-failing warnings you give me of the approaching end of my life -what a grace it is to think of it -

Friday, 25th Nov. 1927

"Friday 25 Nov. 1927 Today I came across this little book. I look and read it. God bless our Venerable Master of Novices, Rev. Fr Grizard. Thirty years have elapsed since he formed his last group of novices, but the words that he spoke during the novitiate, the example he gave, the perfect instrument he was in the hands of God, have produced in every soul that listened to him, gave itself up to God through him, is the better for it today.

To read over the few pages in which my own heart and soul were exposed with their failings of thirty years ago is to understand how wonderful was the director given to us. We were enabled to see ourselves guided as we were by the director, who in his turn was guided by God. We saw and understood ourselves as we were, and what I am today. The life-long struggle has gone on against the self-same failings and weaknesses..."

If only I had continued to take note each day of all my meditations! I would be a saint today instead of a poor miserable sinner full of imperfections if not worse. I thank God for the director he gave me I thank God for the graces he gave me then and ever since then and today – innumerable graces. Thanks be to my Mother Mary. Oh Mother Mary, how good you have been to me during all these years. And St Joseph! And my guardian angel.

I thank you Oh Jesus Christ, my Divine loving Saviour, friend, benefactor and merciful judge. If I am still on earth, still a member of the Church, still live in Nigeria it is owing to your innumerable graces. Today I know only too well the nothingness that I am. Only a continued miracle of your divine grace, loving friendship - these have saved, me from hell. Oh Jesus, I am sorry for my worthless life, sorry -that I did not permit You to make of it what Your Divine Heart wished to make of it. Forgive me unto the end, now I know I will need all Your mercy and forgiveness. I love You with the sinner's love. Oh keep me near You - keep me near You - keep Your Divine Hand on my head, support my faltering, tottering steps. Cover my miserable sores, my nakedness, with the balm of Your healing mercy. Keep this worn out heart of mine near to Your Divine Heart. Oh keep me with You until I reach with You the gates of Heaven. I ask this through the merciful motherly intercession of Mary, Your Mother O Jesus and my Mother. It was You gave Her to me, to be my Mother on that great day of the Redemption.

J. Shanahan.

I will frequently read over the notes taken during the Novitiate thirty years ago. Oh, Jesus, grant me Thy grace - the greatest of all graces - holy perseverance unto the end, which I accept *toto corde*.

25th November, 1931:

Today I happened to put my hand on this little notebook. Holy Providence arranged it so. Oh Holy Providence, I thank You with all the gratitude of this poor sin stained heart and soul of mine. I thank you with the gratitude of the pardoned repentant sinner. Grant O my God, that I may never forget to what extent I am a sinner - to what extent Your mercy has encompassed me with Your love, in spite of my sins. Grant me this grace to be ever more humble, more and more grateful, more and more detached from self, from all persons and all things on this earth. Grant me the grace to be at long last wholly Yours, my God, that You may make of me the

"Alter Christus" You wished to make of me even before I was born. Since I wrote these lines in 1926, important events - important for me have taken place. In March 1930 I tendered to our Holy Father my resignation from the office of Vic.Apostolic. In May my request was granted. The letter announcing it arrived in Onitsha on July 3rd. By the fact, I ceased to be Vic.Apostolic of S. Nigeria, my Co-Adjutor, Rt Rev Dr.Heerey taking over - *de jure* - charge of his Vicariate.

This acceptance of my resignation is another of Our Lord's exceptional favours granted to me. He is partly detaching me from this world. I am happy as I have not been for years. No longer any responsibility beyond caring for my own soul, caring for that great day, the day of my death, when God will call me away in His mercy from this work.

I will not leave Nigeria until after Easter 1932. Dr Heerey is home in Ireland. He will be ready to return by the end of '32. I will do what I can to keep things going in such a way that the new Bishop's absence will not be felt. V Rev Fr Th O'Connor is Vic. Delegate and Prin. Sup. in charge during the Bishop's absence. Now ends my association with Nigeria as a Missionary. Once again I wish to say how full my heart is with gratitude to Our Lord and for all those who in His Name and authority - with such charity and mercy have co-operated with Him.

1. - in bringing me into the world and into the Catholic Church - my good Catholic parents and the Parish Priest.
2. - in teaching me in school - my school teacher.
3. - in making my home life happy - my parents and Our Lord.
4. - in making it possible for me to be a religious - poor old Bro.Adelm
5. - in taking me, a poor boy, for nothing into a secondary school- Fr. Limbour,CSSp at Beauvais.
6. - in receiving me into the Congregation - Fr. Bertsch at Cellule
7. - in allowing me to make my profession - Rockwell 1898
8. - in ordaining me a priest - Blackrock 1900
9. - in sending me -to Africa - 1902 – 1932
10. - in appointing me Ordinary of Nigeria, Pref. Ap. 1905 - 1931
11. - Bishop and Vicar.Apostolic 1920 - 1931
12. - in giving me time to prepare for a good, holy, happy death. July 1931

For these and other countless graces from the bottom of my heart I thank God and all those who have been and are still His visible representatives, relatives and friends, for my personal welfare and sanctification. May God grant me pardon for all the ingratitude I have shown to Him and to all His friends during these years. And Mary, Mother of God, Mother of Jesus Christ, Mother of Divine Graces,

Mother of Sorrows, my Mother - all my heart goes out to you, with all my love - to you my beloved Mother for having been such a good Mother to me.

And then you, St. Joseph, my great patron saint, what do I owe to you. And you, my beloved Guardian Angel, how I thank you. I crave for mercy and pardon, for Your love and grace, my Lord Jesus and for final perseverance unto the end of my life.

The Congregation of the Holy Ghost and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Jos. Shanahan, CSSp., Onitsha.

25th November 1931

This is the final entry made by Shanahan in his spiritual diary.

Among the last notes written by Shanahan, found on the fly-pages of his breviary: "Now marvel of marvels, the love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father, expressed in the eternal self-surrender and eternal embrace is productive of a Third Person, the Holy Spirit. This love becomes fruitful to the extent of producing the Spirit of Love - the Living Love of God, the Father for God the Son. The whole love of the Father is in the Son, and the love of the Son is in the Father, and this is a Person - the Living Love of God, The Holy Spirit of Love uniting and giving forever Divine Infinite happiness to the Father and the Son. So that God is Love, That is the term of all the processions of the mysterious life of God. It is to have part in this life that God has called us. Our soul must be in contact with the divine life-giving Love that God is. He, God, comes to us under cover of our human nature. The mysterious life that is hidden in God's own self comes to us in Jesus Christ. It is still hidden directly from our vision either of body or soul but since Jesus Christ proves to us that he is God, and thus has eternal life in him to give to us if only we believe and agree to become his loving brothers and co-heirs with him. This we do by acknowledging Him to be what He is: The Son of God made man. He does all the rest provided we allow him to do it in his own way by obeying him. Here below is a time of preparation, preparation of the new-born child of God from Baptism for the Holy Eucharist. Later on when the work is complete we shall have the vision of God and possess God in life eternal. All that Jesus Christ has said we believe absolutely, because he is God. All for us depends on our faith in Jesus Christ.

Domine adauge nobis fidem. Tu es Christus filii Dei vivi.

Domine Deus, et Deus meus.

God does all, but we must believe that He can and will do all if only we do all that humanly speaking we can do - in conformity with our nature - lovingly conducted by the Holy Spirit. 'For on that wherein He Himself had suffered and been tempted he is able to succour men also that are tempted.' (Heb. 11:10). That in Him and through Him whose members Thou wast pleased to make us, we may become victorious over the empire of death and partakers of the glorious resurrection . . ."

Teaching in Rockwell 1897-1902



Joseph Shanahan – member of Rockwell Rugby Club team 1898

Teaching in Rockwell College 1897-1902

Historical Perspective

Rockwell College had been taken over in 1864 by the Holy Ghost Congregation not as a secondary college nor as a juniorate for the society but as a seminary for training priests for work in Scotland. That was the purpose set for this establishment by its founder, M. Charles Thiébault, a wealthy French businessman residing in Scotland. Hence the name 'The Scotch College', Rockwell.

At first the archbishop of Cashel, Dr Leahy, forbade the Congregation to take in any Irish students from the Diocese of Cashel as boarders lest the college interfere with the intake of the diocesan junior seminary then conducted at Thurles. There was no ban on taking in aspirants for the Congregation and day students. Those destined for the Congregation were eventually located in the private house built by Thiébault for his own use known as Lake House and later as St Joseph's.¹

Because of the good relations built up with the Archbishop of Cashel and the local clergy the limitation on taking in boarders was removed thus providing the scope for the development of a lay boarding school as well as catering for the few day students attending from the local area. When the Scotch College experiment was abandoned from 1874 Rockwell continued to function as a secondary boarding school with a lay-department and a juniorate. Located in the country, far from centres of population, it had to depend mainly on boarders, and in order to attract students it had to strive hard to be seen to be exceptionally successful. Successful it was during the first years of the public examinations conducted by the Intermediate Board from 1878. The man principally responsible for Rockwell's academic success in those years was the Dean of studies, Fr John T. Murphy, working in close co-operation with the President, a very expert administrator, Fr Peter Huvéty's.

With the transfer of Fr Huvéty's to Blackrock on the death of Père Jules Leman in 1880, and the change of Fr Murphy to Pittsburgh, Pa in 1886, Rockwell began to suffer economically and academically. Times were bad throughout Ireland and the number of students attending colleges dropped. Had Joseph Shanahan come to Rockwell in 1886 instead of heading far away to Beauvais in northern France, he would have experienced the college at a low ebb. There were just over fifty boarders, a dozen day students, and ten in the juniorate. Blow after blow seemed to hit the college. The Dean of studies, Fr Thomas Fogarty, was taken away to try to revive a struggling mission in Bechuanaland, southern Africa (1887), the juniorate was closed in 1888 and the students were transferred to Blackrock, senior grade was suppressed, and the financial state of the college caused alarm.²

If the college was to survive it was felt that someone with a flair for development and for practical administration should take over. The arrival of Fr Amet Limbour in Ireland at this juncture was seen as providential. Having relinquished his post as director of the Apostolic School at Beauvais he was willing to take on the challenge presented by Rockwell. He was appointed Superior in 1889 in succession to Fr Prosper Goepfert³

Beauvais' loss was Rockwell's gain. Joseph Shanahan, then studying at Beauvais, was to see with some anxiety that his benefactor, who had offered him a free place in the college at Beauvais, had left the immediate scene. Joseph's uncle, Br

Adelm Walsh, had been sent to Ballarat in 1888 to join the Irish group led by Fr Edward Reffé to open a school there at the request of Irish-born Bishop Moore. It would appear that two students followed Père Limbour to Ireland, John Walsh and Henri Blanchot. But there was no question of his taking Joseph Shanahan with him as there was by then no juniorate at Rockwell and no 'free' places available. All must now pay their way, and all must pull their weight. Père Limbour was himself a man of dynamic character. He set about reviving the fortunes of Rockwell at all levels. Much of what he saw in the Irish way of life displeased him as a waste of money and lacking in style. Even the style of life lived by the community met with his disapproval. He viewed it as a deviation from French Spiritan standards - too much socialising with the surrounding farmers, going to political meetings, giving more time to organising sport and games than to planning church services etc. He had his personal vision of what Rockwell should be, but he was in danger of finding himself running a one-man show.⁴

In 1890 Rockwell received one of its greatest-ever organisers in the person of the newly-ordained Dr Edward Crehan. He was appointed Dean of studies, and from then on the college began to move once more at all levels. The numbers began to increase, successes in the public examinations came their way; and all due to the dynamic leadership of Dr Crehan. The press was influenced to take notice and to give glowing accounts of the achievements and the facilities of Rockwell College. All along the most faithful supporter of Rockwell was the Archbishop of Cashel, Dr Thomas Croke. He lost no opportunity of calling attention to the academic successes of Rockwell, which were in fact truly outstanding.⁵

The juniorate was reopened in 1890 and the numbers in the college soon topped the hundred. Bigger numbers called for more accommodation. Fr Limbour decided, however, to start with building a church in keeping with his standards as practised in Beauvais. Typically, he by-passed native architects and commissioned a plan from his architect in Beauvais - a man who had little conception of what was in keeping with the Irish scene. That project never got beyond the crypt stage. With all his sterling qualities Père Limbour, unlike his two predecessors, failed to fit in with the Irish scene. It was felt by all that he must go. He went in fact to Haiti in 1894. En route he stayed for some time at Langonnet Abbey in Brittany where he renewed his acquaintance with his former protégé, Joseph Shanahan, then pursuing his philosophy course.

It was only with the arrival of Fr John Stephens, returned from the failed project in Ballarat, that it was decided to resume work on the chapel, this time with the aid of an Irish architect, Mr Ashlin. The foundation stone was blessed on 15 June 1896 by Archbishop Croke. His eulogy of Rockwell, and his direct appeal for funds that day, caused the money to flow in but it was the successful begging tour in the USA conducted by Br Aidan Ryan which ensured that the necessary £3,000 was collected.⁶

In 1897, the year the chapel was completed, Rockwell made the headlines in the national press for its outstanding performance in the public examinations. The total number of students had by then reached the two hundred mark and was rising. There were 10 priests on the staff, 10 prefects, 13 Brothers and 4 lay-professors. Rockwell was full to the brim. It was also full of confidence and rearing to go for another academic triumph.

Enter Shanahan

This, then, was the Rockwell Joseph Shanahan encountered for the first time as he

returned from eleven years' exile in France to take up his post as prefect late in August 1897. Coming straight from the novitiate in Chevilly this was to be a challenging experience. In Chevilly the whole régime was geared to priestly formation, to the practice of the regular religious life, and preparation for the apostolate, which mostly meant service in Africa. All in Rockwell was unashamedly geared to academic achievement in the public examinations as, let us hasten to add, was the case in every secondary school in Ireland at that time. Even the extra-curricular activities were part of that great strategy, namely to be perceived by the parents and the public to be a success at all levels.

How Shanahan found himself posted to Rockwell at this stage is not totally clear. He was soon to write in a letter to the Superior General, Mgr Le Roy: 'You know, Monseigneur, that I am here not by choice but by duty.' There is no clear record of the Rockwell authorities having asked for him in particular. Little would have been known about him there except by his uncle Br Adelm, but it would be in character for Adelm to have suggested that it was time to give Joseph a chance to renew his contact with his native country. He had years earlier arranged that Joseph's two brothers, Michael (1879) and Patrick (1888) be accepted into the juniorate at Blackrock, and just now was arranging that Joseph's brother Dick be employed as a lay teacher at Rockwell.⁷

For whatever reason Joseph Shanahan's name came up in the plans for the allocation of staff for the coming year when Fr Botrel, the Irish Provincial, made his official visit to Paris in August 1897. A letter from Père Grizard, General Secretary, to Botrel on 27 August 1897, has this note: 'Having received your telegram for Mr Shanahan and consulted Monseigneur, I will inform Mr Schanaan (sic) this evening and send him on to you'.⁸

It could well be that the Irish province had been asked to pay Shanahan's account while in the senior scholasticate and it was felt that he should be expected to pay his way by prefecting like the other Irish aspirants, some of whom had done many years service by now. It may also have had something to do with the plans being discussed for launching a senior scholasticate in Ireland in the near future.

Fr Botrel's telegram to Paris asking for Shanahan to be sent on arrived on 16 August 1897. By the time he was located and was ready for the homeward journey it was already 1 September. In the Blackrock community journal kept by Fr Ebenrech there is this entry for 2 September: 'Fr Cremer arrived from Germany; also a novice from Chevilly, Mr Shanahan.' No doubt Shanahan had an interview with the Provincial, Fr Botrel, who resided at the college, in order to receive his instructions. As to the gist of these instructions, we are left in no doubt by Ebenrech's entry for the following day, 3 September: 'Mr Shanahan left for Rockwell today to teach there.' We can imagine then that Shanahan on his train journey to his native county was experiencing mixed feelings. He was facing into a school and a community where he knew no one - no one, that is, except his uncle Br Adelm who must have been thrilled at the prospect of his arrival. As Br Adelm would soon be introducing him to his confrères and colleagues this is the time for us to look briefly at some of the staff with whom Shanahan had now to work and live.

Personnel

First, the Superior under whom he was to serve for the next five years, Fr N.J. Brennan. A native of Kilkenny, he had been a brilliant student at the French College, Blackrock, featuring with distinction as a student of the ancient classics in the Catholic University examinations, and he was a regular contributor in Latin and

Greek in the French College Literary Journal. He was noted especially for his gift for extempore compositions in Latin verse on any subject, even incidents in a rugby match. Author of some text-books for teaching Latin, he had recently published a Latin verse translation of part of Childe Harold. Finally, he was a man of a very gentle disposition if somewhat lacking in drive.⁹

What was lacking in forcefulness on the part of the Superior was compensated for by his deputy, Dr Edward Crehan. Brilliant, dynamic and efficient, he had lifted Rockwell to the heights. There were those among his confrères who said that he did this at some cost to the religious observance in the community - that he had gone too far with his interpretation of '*Laborare est Orare*'. But this is how he was seen by students at the time:

'Dr Crehan was a dynamic personality. He was certainly one of the creators of Rockwell College. A few days after the opening of the session he assembled us all, less than eighty in number, in the Study Hall and read out the list of successes in the previous Intermediate Examination. One exhibition and one prize. We clapped enthusiastically. He announced a holiday. We cheered vociferously...'

Looking into the distant future - Shanahan would have to deal with Dr Crehan as the Provincial of the Irish Province, 1907-10, and they would live in retirement at Clareville together, 1934-38.

Two of the priests had returned from the unsuccessful Ballarat venture: Fr John Stephens, who as Bursar was mainly responsible for supervising the building of the chapel, and Fr Christian Schmidt, native of Limbourg, Germany, and a former student at Rockwell. Fr Schmidt was very keen on sport and was the mainstay of the Rockwell senior cricket team over the years. There were the younger priests who had yet to make their mark: Frs Martin Moloney, Richard Dooley and Michael Colgan. Fr Louis de Maison, a native of Savoy, was director of the juniorate which had been restored in 1890, and, as it was again under threat of closure for lack of numbers, he seems to have made an all-out recruiting drive but with mixed results. For example there were the Leen brothers from Abbeyfeale, who were to feature prominently in the life of the Congregation later, and the Conroy brothers (O'Conaire) Michael and Padraic the famous Gaelic writer - neither of whom could, with the gift of hindsight, be said to have had the ghost of a vocation for the priesthood.

Those with whom Shanahan was to have the closest association were of course the 'prefects' or junior masters, many of whom were his senior in age and service but all alike lacking in any professional training apart from their secondary studies. Most of these men were to be familiar as priests in the schools and elsewhere for the next generation: Ned Cleary, Daniel Egan and John Kingston, brother-in-law of Cathal Brugha. To Fr Kingston belongs the distinction of bringing the O'Conaire brothers, Padraic and Michael, to Rockwell from Milltownmalbay where his uncle was parish priest. There was also Michael Kelly, future master of novices at Kimmage Manor when the first Irish novitiate was established in 1911; later he was an active member of the CSSP Mission Band in the USA. At that moment he was a very committed member of the Rockwell senior rugby team. Tom O'Brien was one of three brothers from Mullinahone who became priests in the Congregation. Joseph Baldwin, who had already been prefect at Blackrock, was a noted cricket and rugby player; he was to spend his active life in Rockwell and Blackrock and was to rejoin Bishop Shanahan in retirement in Clareville in the 1930s.¹⁰ Finally, there was Thomas McDonagh from Cloughjordan, who had entered the juniorate in Rockwell in 1892 and had been prefect since 1896. He was to remain on till 1901 in Rockwell. By then he felt he

had repaid the expenses incurred by his education and, realising he had no vocation to the priesthood, he went on to win fame as a writer, university lecturer and co-founder with Padraig Pearse of Scoil Éanna. Finally he was executed as one of the leaders of the 1916 Rising. One of his books of poetry was written while a prefect in Rockwell and dedicated to Dr Crehan.

McDonagh and Shanahan may well have been close friends. They came from much the same area of North Tipperary, and students later recalled that they were the prefects in charge of the large study.

The *État du Personnel* for 1898 mentions that there were four lay teachers, and from other sources we identify them as follows: Michael Smithwick, a local boy, was one of the most successful students of the decade in Rockwell, a pillar of the rugby and cricket teams, a close friend of Thomas McDonagh then and later at Scoil Éanna. After several years teaching at Rockwell, while studying for his BA under the Royal University system, he passed on to Blackrock where he continued his studies at the university college while also acting as tutor. He was to have a considerable influence on Eamon de Valera, future President of Ireland. He was cousin of Fr John Hogan CSSp who had served as a missionary in Angola, 1879-85 and the story of his life as told in the Rockwell-published *Messenger of St Joseph* may well have had a determining influence on Joseph Shanahan's vocation. Smithwick's son Milo was also to join the Congregation.

Another brilliant student of that period, Thomas Morris, returned to Rockwell as teacher after having graduated through the RUI at a very early age. As President of the Blackrock College Union he would later be well known to Bishop Shanahan. Mr Griffin, the music teacher, came in from Cashel as part-time teacher as he had been doing for many years. Finally, there was Michael Ryan - a native of Solohead, Tipperary, and a former student of Blackrock. In later years he was lecturer at St Patrick's Teacher-Training College, Drumcondra.

Unfortunately no community journal seems to have been kept during this period, so we have to look elsewhere for significant contemporary entries. We find that the meagre records of the community council meetings deal mostly with plans and costs for buildings and services. Stained-glass windows for the completed chapel were ordered in 1897; plans for a major new wing were shelved on advice from the Superior General; Mr Smithwick and Mr Ryan were to be offered £25 for their services; a neighbouring farm of 26 acres was taken on at a rent of £28; money was to be paid to a prefect whose mother was in financial straits; the former chapel was to become a dormitory providing extra accommodation for 50 etc.

The stained glass windows were being put in place in the new college chapel in August 1897 as Shanahan arrived from France and, though much was still to be done before the solemn blessing took place the following year, Mass was being said there immediately both for the students and the community. So in a sense Shanahan and the Rockwell chapel can be said to have begun their service together. The high altar was a gift from James Ryan O'Connor in memory of his father, described as 'one of our most devoted friends'. These O'Connors, as we have seen, had originally lived in Rockwell where they acted as herds. M. Thiébault had provided in his will that the O'Connors as his faithful employees should inherit a residence and farm near Cashel. The Lake House, built by Thiébault as his own private residence when he moved out of the main building, had served as the juniorate over the years as well as housing some of the lay staff. It was now on the verge of another destiny with which Shanahan would be involved, namely housing the new senior scholasticate. But that was one very long year away as yet.

For December 1897 we find the following note in one of the community records: 'Brs Adelm, Ryan and Omer are leaving.' This is our first intimation that Br Adelm, Shanahan's uncle, whom we last met at Beauvais in 1888 as he left for Ballarat, had been by then attached to Rockwell. This must have been a pleasant experience for Joseph and we can well imagine that there was a family reunion in the Shanahan home at the first possible opportunity. When the Ballarat project was abandoned in 1892 and all the personnel had returned to Europe, Br Adelm was asked to report once again to his former community at Beauvais where the Congregation was by then conducting a junior secondary school on behalf of the diocese. Very soon, however, he was told to pack his bags again and head this time for Sierra Leone. The climate, which merited for that mission the unenviable name 'The White Man's Grave', took its toll on his constitution, forcing his return to Europe after three years. This time (1896) he was sent to Rockwell to recuperate and to help at the housekeeping. When Dr Crehan discovered, however, that Br Adelm was a fluent French speaker after his years in Paris, Mesnières and Beauvais, he called on his services for the classroom and the book shop.

In December, however, it was taken for granted at Rockwell that they were to lose the services of Br Adelm as he was being posted to The Gambia. That was a decision made in Paris without knowledge of Adelm's actual state of health. He sent on a medical certificate from the local G.P. stating that he was in no condition to face back to such a climate. He was suffering from recurring fever and other complications. So Adelm was left on to continue his work in the classroom and book shop for the next eleven years. He was in later years to ask several times to be allowed to join his nephew, Fr Joseph, in Nigeria, but it was not until 1909 that he was released from Rockwell to replace the ailing Br David Doran from Aherlow. When some years later Adelm's health was so undermined that he was advised to return home he begged to be allowed to end his days among 'the poor blacks'.

Prefecting

Unfortunately very little in the way of concrete detail has come to hand about Shanahan's prefecting at Rockwell either inside or outside the classroom. In the *Etat du Personnel* for 1901, when Shanahan was attached to Rockwell as a priest, we read that apart from his other duties he taught French, Latin, Greek and Mathematics. That he should be teaching French could be taken for granted. Some wag in the community at this time remarked "In Rockwell we have a Frenchman who can't converse in French and an Irishman who can't speak English" - referring to the length of time the two men had spent away from their native land. Latin and Greek should also have presented little problem to a man who had gone through the whole French secondary education system up to '*philosophie*'. But one wonders how he could have coped with Mathematics in an Irish situation as that was always a problem for Frenchmen in English-speaking schools, particularly because of the metric system employed in France.

Later in Nigeria Shanahan recalled for Br Kevin Healy CSSp some details about his Rockwell days, in particular about his first encounter with a class of senior students as their French teacher. This is how Br Healy recalled years later Shanahan's remarks:

He said he felt decidedly awkward about facing these senior students being quite out of practice at English. However, he soon hit on a plan. When he first entered the class, he took the French text and told the boys he would read it for them in French as he was anxious that they would learn the correct French pronunciation. Then he would give the literal translation and finally

would call on one or other to put that in ‘classical’ English. Afterwards, at the Grammar, he went through the irregular verbs etc., giving the different parts and tenses of the verbs and getting the boys to translate. Thus while the pupils were learning French, he was regaining his English. Meanwhile he read Shakespeare and other English classical authors in his own room, and so gradually made up for himself the English education that he had missed. It should be added that he made a splendid teacher.¹¹

With regard to his method of teaching Latin and Greek we have one student’s recollection, and though his comments probably refer to the years after Shanahan’s ordination, they are worth quoting in this context as the student in question, Edward Leen, had known Shanahan during all the five years he spent in Rockwell.

This man had a more Christian and a more independent mind than anyone else I knew. Instead of doing Aeschylus or Xenophon in Greek class, he insisted on translating St Luke’s Gospel. He scorned the prevalent attitude that all non-classical Greek was barbarous. He explained to us that he wanted to Christianise as well as teach.¹²

Surprisingly the most vivid recollections people retained of Shanahan at this period were not of his classroom performance but his athletic appearance and prowess. This is one aspect of his formation which he did not owe to his French training. On the contrary. We must forget all about current French form on the playing fields. French genius in that area was still untapped, and for clerical students such participation in field games, entailing the putting aside of the clerical garb and involvement in such indecorous body contact, was taboo. Rugby in particular was ruled out.

The same norms were then about to be applied for the scholastics in Ireland if some directors had their way. Principal among those who opposed such games for students bound to wear the clerical garb was Shanahan’s great benefactor Père Limbour. Among the many aspects of life in Ireland that he disagreed with was the participation by the junior scholastics and prefects in games with the lay students which involved ‘toggling out’. And never being slow to make his opinions known, he saw to it that the Provincial council and the central administration were to make a ruling on the matter. There were those who supported him in this matter, notably Fr Botrel, President of Blackrock and Provincial. This prohibition did not worry many in Blackrock as the school had little difficulty in fielding a good side without calling on the aid of the scholastics. For St Mary’s, Rathmines, and for Rockwell it was different. There was little possibility of fielding a creditable side without drawing on all available resources. For Rockwell in particular it was considered of vital importance as part of the publicity drive to make its mark in Munster rugby at senior or club level - there being no schools’ team as such then. For this the prefects were necessary, as were the lay teachers and even their close friends and neighbours the Ryan brothers, Jack and Mike.

Once Dr Crehan took responsibility for the teams, when he was called on to act as Dean of discipline as well as of studies, he could be counted on to make a strong case for the involvement of prefects on the Rockwell team. And so he did in spite of protests from higher quarters. He had himself made his mark in schools’ rugby at Blackrock in the early eighties when, in spite of his lack of height, he was considered worthy of a place in a representative Irish side in matches against an English youths’ team. The Ryan brothers for their part relished this distraction from farming; they liked the athletic challenge, the social life and the travelling away from home. It was arranged through the St Mary’s College contacts that they could play

occasionally for Bective Rangers Rugby Club and so catch the selectors' eye for a place on the Irish team. Rockwell basked in the publicity given to their performance on the Irish side. References to these aspects of school life and their successes against Munster clubs were included in the accounts sent for publication in the *Bulletin Général*, much to the annoyance of some members of the Irish Provincial council, who pointed out that these successes were achieved in the teeth of prohibitions, as prefects were the mainstay of the team.

No wonder then that when Joseph Shanahan arrived unannounced from France to join the teaching staff, he was looked up and down and hailed as a gift from the gods. That he was totally ignorant of the laws of the game proved no obstacle. There were many willing mentors. The interesting thing is that Shanahan took to this new world with zest as if his pent-up energies were breaking out of the strait-jacket imposed by the years of French seminary life. And it is ironic that the only extant photograph of Shanahan during his five eventful years in Rockwell is where he features in the rugby team captained by his confrere Joseph Baldwin, and where he is flanked by the Ryan brothers of Triple Crown fame.

In the absence of contemporary press reports of Shanahan's performance we have to use again recollections written in later years by students of the time. This is how junior Edward Leen from Abbeyfeale saw his new prefect from the comfortable perspective of his bed in the dormitory as Shanahan rose early to get in a session of training before facing the chores of his school day:

This first image is one of early morning in a dormitory on the ground floor of Rockwell College. It was a large dormitory at one end of which there was a sort of alcove in which was a Prefect's bed. At the other end slept the Prefect in charge of the dormitory. I have a perfect recollection of lying there in bed awake in the early morning and seeing a man emerge from the alcove. He was a fine build of a man; he walked with a characteristic stride, and he had a look of determination but also of reserve and intentness. That man was Dr Shanahan. He was making his way to the football field. He was a forward of great fame and he rose to train in the early mornings. In that vision you have a good impression of him as he was, about the age of twenty-four years. It was our first contact.¹³

Teaching and prefecting gave Mr Shanahan many an opportunity of developing those qualities of self-reliance and initiative which form an essential part of the moral armour of the successful missionary. Incidentally, in the course of those years, the future Bishop earned for himself a reputation that still lives in the annals of Munster Rugby as one of the finest players in the southern province for strength, unremitting drive and splendid sportsmanship.

Elsewhere Fr Leen is quoted as follows: 'A fine build of a man, who walked with a characteristic stride; a splendid footballer, famous for his tackle; he played with set jaw, without speaking a word...'

Another junior student in Rockwell at that time, James Mellett from Claremorris, who was to work later with Shanahan in Nigeria, spoke of him in his memoirs as follows:

Among the teachers there was one in particular who impressed me in a special way. I was in his French class in my first year. He spoke French perfectly, had the gracious manners of an aristocrat and discoursed as freely and feelingly on French Catholicism and on France that we felt sure he was a Frenchman...¹⁴

The report on Rockwell for this period published in the *Bulletin Général* contains this paragraph about the sporting activities during the year:

Games contribute much to the enthusiasm and good spirit of our collegians and their success in this department has also been outstanding. Thus in football Rockwell has beaten the leading clubs in Cork, Limerick and Dublin, who have come here to play us, and the press has high-lighted the great advantages Rockwell has to offer to Catholic parents who wish to have their sons educated here. Our students are divided into eight clubs or teams according to age and strength, and they play with zest on all free days. Two of our players have been chosen to play in the great international matches between Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland and this has made the name of Rockwell resound in the press and for the spectators in these countries...¹⁵

One wonders what the French readers made of this facet of Irish education. The directors in the senior scholasticate might have had reason for worry if they had heard of the long hours involved in travelling from Rockwell in those days to matches in Cork and Limerick, the late hours and the beverages considered necessary to boost their spirits. The other side of the coin can be gathered from an extant letter written the following year to Michael Smithwick by a former prefect by then in the novitiate in France. He was managing to survive on memories of the past year while keeping himself fit in the vain hope that he might be sent for as sub:

...As regards present form I really feel fit for anything. We have two walks per week on each of which we do from ten to twelve miles...The director supplied me with dumb-bells and every day I give about a quarter of an hour to my old friend Sandow. We have a game here they call '*boules*'. Little girls in Ireland wouldn't invent anything half as silly, ...I believe young Ryan hasn't been able to don the togs this year either. He has to content himself with giving notes on the game and working up some combination among the New Inn Rovers...

Religious profession

When we recall again that Shanahan had come straight from the novitiate to this form of activity, and that technically he was still a novice during his first months at Rockwell, we can imagine how difficult he must have found it to adjust and to maintain the spiritual conviction and devotional life which had become second nature to him while living in a semi-monastic milieu. We gather from Fr Leen that Shanahan always gave the impression of being extraordinarily recollected even in the midst of his duties in the school. Yet one can imagine that he found it difficult to get the spare time and necessary quiet to compose his letter to the Superior General requesting the favour of making his profession, which should have been made in Chevilly in August had the authorities there not slipped up in certain canonical requirements for that extraordinary novitiate year. Luckily we have the two letters written on this occasion, 4 December 1897, one stating his motives in requesting to be professed in the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, the other giving his CV, as it were, in order to give the authorities a clear picture of who he was and how long he had been on the road. We give both in translation:

I am eleven years in the Congregation, whether as an aspirant or as a student. I was given the habit on the 29th June 1890 at Cellule. I was three years at Beauvais, five years in Cellule, one year at Langonnet, one year and some months at Chevilly.

With respect to trials and difficulties I have nothing to remark. I am resolved to do all that in me lies to be a good religious and a good member of the Congregation. I have a greater attraction for the Missions than for any other work. Nevertheless I am resolved to sacrifice generously my tastes in order to obey the desires of my Superiors.

The religious life in the Congregation as I understand it, is a life of prayer, of work and of continual abnegation. Each one must forget himself and think only of the general interests of the whole Congregation. Each one must sanctify himself if he wishes to attain the twofold purpose which he envisaged when entering the Congregation - the salvation of his own soul and the salvation of the poor Blacks of Africa.

It is with these sentiments I ask to be admitted to Religious Profession.
Shanahan, Joseph.

2nd letter

Very Reverend Monseigneur and Father,

I wish to ask the favour of being admitted to Profession as a Professed Scholastic. More than ever I shall try to develop in myself the spirit of our Venerable Father, that spirit of fervour, of charity and of sacrifice which should animate every member of the Congregation.

I beg of you Monseigneur not to forget how great is my desire to go to Africa to fight and die beside my Brothers. You do not believe, I hope, that a few months spent in the company of the heroes of Homer and the theorems of Euclid have made a Professor of me. You know Monseigneur that I am here not by choice but by duty. However it will be as the good God wills. Profession, studies, orders - all as he wills. Since I am here, then I shall do all that I can to fulfil my duty. That, I think is the best testimony of affection that I can give to the Congregation that has been so good to me - so happy to see at its head, him who has held so high and carried so far the banner of the Gospel under the burning skies of the dark continent.

Please accept, Monseigneur, the humble expression of my filial affection...

Accompanying these letters were the official notes sent from Rockwell by the Superior Fr N.J.Brennan, signed by the Provincial. These notes took the usual form of set questions and answers. In reply to the following questions 'Attachment to the Congregation? Solid. 'Decided to persevere?' Yes. Principal qualities? Nothing salient; good sense. Observance of rules? Good. Things in which he is lacking? Irregular at times for exercises, but that is explained in part by his functions. Getting lax or progressing? Progressing. Impression made within? Good. Impression made without? Good. What is he to be advised to do? Continue as he has been doing.¹⁶

As there is no community journal from this period in Rockwell we have no account of the ceremony of Joseph Shanahan pronouncing his vows - the first such ceremony to take place in the new college chapel, just as his ordination was later to be the first to be held in Blackrock College chapel. We know that the ceremony of taking his vows took place on Easter Sunday - 10 April 1898, only because of the following note in a letter from the Mother House to the Provincial, Fr Jules Fr Botrel: "Mr O Schanaan(sic) has written to me from Rockwell saying that he made his profession on Easter Sunday. I don't recall that you mentioned this in your correspondence. Nevertheless it was an event to announce. It is certain that his Act of Profession has not been sent to the Mother house. Would you please send it without

delay.”¹⁷

This was one of the indications that a tightening up of the Irish Provincial administration was called for. It also underlines that Shanahan himself was keeping in direct touch with France in the expectation that he was soon to return to continue his studies in Chevilly. Incidentally, the first official record we have of Shanahan in the archives of the Irish province is the lodging there of the two documents relating to his profession: (a) The *Acte Civil D'Admission* (CSSp) and (b) The Act of Profession itself.¹⁸

Sports and Examinations

In the meantime life went on as usual at Rockwell. The biggest event before the public examinations was the annual Sports day. Most of the preparations were usually done by the prefects. For Shanahan, however, this would be a totally new experience where he could contribute little and where he would have been somewhat surprised by the influx of parents, past students and the press.

One would like to know how Shanahan's students fared in the public examinations. In those days the examination results were published in some detail in the national press, and once again Rockwell was given the highest praise as they headed the list of boarding schools in the number of exhibitions or scholarships won. Copies of these newspaper reports were sent to Paris and extracts were published in the *Bulletin Général*. A Dublin daily is quoted as saying:

Bravo Rockwell! You have surpassed all your rivals and indeed all previous successes - and that without your students having to forego even one hour of their recreation. They have more sports, more football, handball and cricket, more boating and swimming than any other college in Ireland...

Getting down to specifics, Rockwell had gained 24 Exhibitions; one student, Willie Martin, from Murroe, Co Limerick, had won the gold medal for mathematics in senior grade, scoring the highest-ever total of marks to date...The students won for the College £1,522 in result fees and a higher sum still for themselves. The report to Paris adds in brackets and by way of comparison, that the leading Jesuit college secured only £1,300.¹⁹

In the absence of a community journal at Rockwell it is of interest to look into the journal being kept at Blackrock College at that time by the Bursar, Fr John Neville, later bishop and Dr Shanahan's companion in retirement in Clareville. Having given the results for Rockwell and Blackrock he wrote for 1898:

Omitting 'Retained Exhibitions' we head the list of Boarding Schools in Ireland, Rockwell second. Counting 'Retained Exhibitions', we come next to Rockwell. We never before carried off so many composition prizes. Rockwell comes second with seven.

So there were various perspectives from which to view the bald statement of the results as published!

There was one student not in any way as yet connected with either Rockwell or Blackrock who ignored all other aspects of the results for the thirty-two counties in his eager search for just one name. Across the Limerick border in Bruree, one Edward de Valera rejoiced to see that he had won the coveted Exhibition in Junior Grade, 1898. That Exhibition was destined to change his life's course, launching him on a long and varied career, which was to take in Blackrock and Rockwell en route. He would later relate that one of the most vividly recalled events of his school days was the ordination of Fr Shanahan at which he assisted in the Blackrock College chapel in 1900.

Mgr Le Roy's Visitation

The most important event of the year 1898 for the Irish province of the Congregation was the first visit of the Superior General, Mgr Alexander Le Roy. Distinguished missionary, explorer and writer he was unexpectedly elected Superior General in 1896. A dynamic personality he found the Congregation beset by many problems, some originating from a hostile French government, others from the necessity to create new structures within the society itself in order to cater for changing conditions. One change faced with a certain reluctance on the part of Frenchmen was the initiative to create institutions in the various countries that would lead to partial self-government. The first needs were separate houses of formation in the various 'provinces'. A start was made with the Portuguese province where a separate novitiate was opened in 1896. In 1897 a novitiate was launched in the USA under the direction of the sub-master of novices at Chevilly, 1896-96, Fr John O'Gorman. Ireland was more difficult to cater for, even though as far back as the time of Père Leman it was foreseen that senior formation of Irish priests and brothers would have to be conducted at home, once the members of the province were sufficiently formed to the spirit of the Congregation. There was always a slight question mark, however, in Frenchmen's minds about that. It was feared that Irishmen left to themselves would opt more and more for work among their compatriots in foreign lands, and that Africa would not be high up on their list of priorities. However, repeated requests for a new deal were coming from Ireland, even while still governed by a French Provincial, Fr Jules Botrel. The Master of Novices, Père Jean-Marie Grizard, had been dispatched to Ireland in January 1897 to report on the spot to the central administration. Separate houses of formation for Ireland for both priests and brothers were recommended, but there were many problems to be settled about a suitable location, personnel and finance. In fact the financial state of the Irish province was the more immediate worry, and it was significant that when Mgr Le Roy was finally able to come over in July 1898 after having to postpone his visit several times, he brought with him the Bursar General of the society, Fr Ferdinand Faugère.

Normally the visit of the Superior General was an occasion for external celebration within the schools and with official visits to church dignitaries. As the students were away on holidays the deputation got down to business immediately. There was some straight talking and major changes were announced. The communities were told to tighten up on religious observance, cut down expenses and, as a priority, eliminate their heavy burden of debt. A new community was to be set up to cater exclusively for Mission affairs - promotion of Mission awareness among the public, the collecting of funds, the responsibility for missionaries etc. New houses of formation were to be set up for future brothers and future priests. Some tentative arrangements were made about the financing of these projects. Mgr Le Roy returned to Paris feeling that he had made a good start and sent a letter outlining what was to be done. We have no detailed account of his visit because the Blackrock journalist, Fr Ebenrecht, was at home in Alsace at the time. On his return to Ireland Fr Ebenrecht found that he had been appointed Superior of the new community in the provisional Mission house to be opened at Kimberley House, Booterstown Avenue. Fr Ebenrecht had been chosen for this work because over the years he had been noted for his dedicated work for the missions. He had devoted all his spare time to attending to the needs of missionaries, French and Irish, and had been conducting a promotion drive through his regular articles in *The Irish Catholic*, his stamp-collecting and other

projects.

Mgr Le Roy called to Rockwell but we lack any account of the details of the visit. We can be sure Joseph Shanahan made a point of renewing his acquaintance with him. He had first met him at Cellule when as a missionary bishop he revisited the school where he had begun life as a priest, chafing at the bit for two years as a professor while longing to get away to Africa. Now it was Shanahan's turn to stress that he would like to get back to his studies in order to set out for the missions. Le Roy had plans for Rockwell which would soon affect Shanahan. For the community the first shock was that their proposed new wing, so urgently needed to cater for the ever increasing numbers, was again to be postponed, and the juniorate was to be closed to make way for the opening of a senior house of studies at The Lake House. Neither news was welcome and word got to the Provincial that Dr Crehan had threatened to resign in protest. Fr Botrel's comment was 'We are religious, not government ministers'. There were to be changes in staff also. The Bursar, Fr Stephens, was being transferred to St Mary's, Rathmines, in the hopes that he might be able to rescue the school there from the financial crisis which was already threatening its closure. Rockwell was to receive two priests, Fr Hugh Evans, who had been there previously as a prefect, and Fr Nepomucene Müller, a former Rockwell student and prefect from Wurtenberg, Germany; he was now coming from Epinal college in France which was being abandoned by the Congregation.²⁰

Senior Scholasticate at Rockwell

There were many problems to be ironed out first before the proposed Senior Scholasticate could be launched. The junior scholastics had to be accommodated at the Blackrock Juniorate and at the boarding school at Rockwell. Fr Larry Healy at Blackrock feared that with such a loose arrangement Dr Crehan could be expected to hold on to the more academically gifted and send the others to Blackrock! That was what happened. Whereas the more promising students like Ned Leen and Michael O'Connor were retained in the boarding school; among those passed on to Blackrock was Padraig O Conaire. Next there was the question of the staff for the Senior Scholasticate. It was taken for granted that Fr Louis de Maison would continue on as director though he had made vain attempts to make the best case for retaining the juniorate by boosting the intake. He availed of the services of a professional photographer to record the full group of thirty-four as tangible proof of the healthy condition of his department as it faced dissolution. He asked that the proposed new community be given independent status from the local superior, that a new path be laid down around the lake so that the boarders would not be a distraction to the senior clerical students during their walks around the lake. He added a number of other demands which succeeded in convincing the authorities in France and Ireland that they had one unnecessary problem on hand, namely himself. Fr de Maison was recalled to France and posted to the St Joseph's Apostolic School for Young Clerics at Seyssinet near his own native place in Savoy. The director appointed was Fr Paul Meistermann, who was professor in Cellule during Joseph Shanahan's last year there. He was given as helper Fr John Desnier, who had been on the staff at Blackrock the previous year; he had been a student and prefect there, having started his studies at Cellule. Neither of these men was chosen because of his expertise in theology. Both were dedicated men but, apart from the fact that Fr Meistermann had come direct from being director of the juniorate in Cellule, they were not prepared in any way for conducting a senior seminary, even though nominally they were acting under the control of the directors in Chevilly.²¹

To add to the problems of the new staff, the house at St Joseph's had not been prepared for their requirements. The Bursar, Fr Stephens, had just been transferred, and it was now nobody's responsibility to get things in order. So Fr Meistermann, who arrived in Ireland October 11th with four students, had to spend most of the next two weeks putting order into chaos. There seems to have been some uncertainty too as to who exactly were to report for full-time study at the new seminary, St Joseph's. It is not easy to disentangle the situation at this remove. A complication was caused, it seems, by the cycle in theology being followed that year as some had already done a year's theology in Chevilly. But the major problem was the fact that Rockwell former prefects might be called on to help out at the college while also attending lectures in theology. And that is what happened. It would appear that Shanahan was free to resume his theological studies either at St Joseph's or in Chevilly, where he might be able to fit in with the cycle of lectures. He is missing from the group-photo of the teaching staff taken at the college, presumably at the start of the school year, 1898-99. He would have been welcomed as a god-send by Fr Meistermann at St Joseph's as he had known him well at Cellule, and Shanahan by then knew the situation at Rockwell; but a message arrived from Paris for Meistermann, dated 10 October 1898: 'Shanahan is to replace John Byrne as prefect unless Shanahan returns to Chevilly and John Byrne remains at Rockwell.'

The upshot was that Shanahan was told to continue as prefect in Rockwell as from then instead of moving down to St Joseph's! This must have been a sore disappointment. While doing what he was told as usual it would appear that he wrote to the Mother House to state his case. He seemingly asked for permission to be allowed to follow his study of the tracts of theology set for that 2nd year and have this credited to him as a year. In a note to Fr Botrel, 3 November 1898, which is rather difficult to decipher, Fr Eigenmann seems to be saying: 'Considering the way that this aspirant is being used in such an irregular manner, Mgr authorises his studies as sufficing for 2nd year of theology but '*ad duritiam cordis*' and as a thing not at all in accordance with the mind of Rome and consequently without intending to create a precedent.' Someone had taken the decision that since John Byrne had already done five years prefecting at Rockwell he should at last be allowed to continue his theological studies, and that Shanahan should be called on to replace him for a year.²²

Football and Music

There is much correspondence in the general archives of the Congregation about the problems of setting up and conducting this senior scholasticate in Rockwell, but the most surprising document in that collection is a letter from a schoolboy, P. Kavanagh, dated 27 November 1898. The rugby season was starting in earnest at that date, and Rockwell found itself unable to field a full senior team because of the prohibition against prefects taking part in games. Master Kavanagh makes his case clear and begs for the prohibition to be lifted in the interests of the school. Fr Nicholas J Brennan, the President, in a covering letter remarked that, as there had been no abuses at Rockwell, the college should not be punished because of alleged abuses at Blackrock and St Mary's. The reply from Paris pointed out that the Superior General was limited by the decree of the previous year but that he was allowing two or three prefects to play for the 1898-9 season. Three prefects made the team as featured in the photo 1898-99 - one of them being Joseph Shanahan! Joseph was not the only Shanahan, however, on that team: his brother Dick was also a member. He was actually teaching at the college, bringing the number of the

Shanahan clan on the staff to three! A predictable complaint about the permission for prefects to play came from Fr Botrel in his letters to Paris. He seems to have been unaware that prefects had been helping the Blackrock Castle or Club team to win the Leinster 2nds trophy year after year, or that the St Mary's prefects were playing under assumed names for Bective Rugby Club, and later for St Mary's!

There were other extracurricular activities at Rockwell apart from chasing the oval ball. By coincidence the two new priests who arrived on the staff in 1898, Fr Nepomucene Müller and Fr Hugh Evans, were skilled and enthusiastic musicians. So one is not surprised to find that music came to the fore. But one is surprised to see from an elegantly printed programme that Rockwell produced 'The Gondoliers' (with the permission of D'Oyly Carte) in December 1898.

This seems to have been the earliest public production of a 'Gilbert and Sullivan' operetta by a school run by the Holy Ghost Fathers. They were to repeat the achievement next year with the production of 'The Pirates of Penzance'. One can be sure this was Shanahan's first introduction to the comic opera of Gilbert and Sullivan. We don't know how he reacted then but years later, when retired at Clareville, he was not at all enthused by his fellow-prefect of those Rockwell days, Fr Joseph Baldwin, hammering out the tunes of the current production at Blackrock on the piano in the room next door. On receiving a visit from a junior confrere, Fr Brendan Timon, during one of those unsolicited performances, Bishop Shanahan remarked: 'Fr Brendan if you find a bidder for that piano I won't lodge any objections!' Not that he was not himself a lover of music in his younger days. In fact the only time he features in despatches for the year under review, apart from football, is when he is mentioned on a programme for a college concert as singing 'My Normandy', and again when we see from a press report on the public procession held in the Rockwell grounds in 1899 that J Shanahan assisted Fr Müller in the band.

In the report about the school sent for publication in the *Bulletin Général* for that year it is said about the students that their spirit of piety was on a level with their success at games and studies.²³

The Senior Scholasticate had survived its first year at the Lake House but there was little to inspire confidence in its future. The *État du Personnel* gives Fr Meistermann, the director, as teaching Dogma, Canon Law, Church History, while Fr Desnier taught Moral Theology, Sacred Scripture and Liturgy. There were in all only ten students. There were two ordinations in December of students who had already missed out for health reasons in France - John McGrath being ordained deacon and Alphonsus Murphy of Blackrock being ordained to the priesthood. Both ordinations were performed by Archbishop Croke in his private oratory in Thurles. Frs Botrel, the Provincial, and Fr Brennan, President of Rockwell, attended. Dr Croke had gone out of his way to oblige. He was a close friend of Fr Botrel, who had painted his portrait in oils on a number of occasions. It is said that Dr Croke did not like the wrinkles in the latest portrait, so he toned them down with his thumb when he saw Fr Botrel occupied in reading his breviary!

In his report at the end of the year Fr Meistermann had many criticisms to make of the situation at St Joseph's. It suffered especially from its proximity to the college, which continually impinged on the routine of the scholasticate where past and current prefects among the scholastics were in continual contact with the college staff and school events. This was particularly so for those who were still part-time teachers at the college. During the summer recess the scholastics occupied themselves with going on long walks, learning English, practising music etc.²⁴

It was hoped that there would be a new deal in September. Fr Eigenmann, the

official visitator, had spent six weeks in Ireland studying various aspects of the life of the province and making his recommendations.²⁵ At the annual retreat he read a hard-hitting letter from the Superior General, Mgr Le Roy, who was still worried about the financial state of the Irish houses, the alarming leakage of members of the Congregation even among those ordained, and the difficulty with which Irish personnel could be got for the great missions of Sierra Leone, Nigeria and East Africa. It is reported that Fr Eigenmann issued instructions that any prefect in Rockwell who wanted to go to France that year to do the novitiate should be allowed to do so; one 'prefect' might be required to stay on teaching full class, or 'two or three' might be asked to do one hour's class at the college while attending theology at St Joseph's. This was to be an exceptional arrangement and was not to be repeated. Unfortunately for Joseph Shanahan he was one of the three asked for - the others being Philip O'Shea and John Byrne who had already done six year's prefecting! That this was not a satisfactory arrangement was obvious to all. The director's report on that year made it clear to the authorities in Paris that it was calculated to undermine work in the scholasticate and militate against serious theological study on the part of the men involved. Picking up bits of theology on the run during the year and depending on crash courses of cramming for a few weeks was not calculated to inspire a respect for theology.

There was worse to come, for the victims of this system, that is. The director filled in this report for promotion to sacred orders for the students whom he had known during the year 1898-9, omitting comments on the five involved in prefecting duties - Shanahan included among them. The director defended his failure to submit the required certificates for the others, and at this stage he seems to have decided to be rather critical of most of his students as if to stress that the unsuitable set-up had influenced the performance of all. For the record the names on Fr Meistermann's list for 1899 are as follows: John Byrne, Michael Byrne, William Keane, Aloysius Scheer, Joseph Cronenberger, Paul Schwartz, John Kingston, Alphonsus Zind, Patrick Walsh and Joseph Shanahan.²⁶

Final Year and Ordination

Fr Meistermann recommended that the ordinations be spaced out so that all third year students would be priests before they had finished their theology course. As the authorities in the Province were trying to cope with these problems for the first time, they found it rather difficult to arrange for an ordaining prelate to be at hand at the required time. Eventually the Paris authorities arranged that Mgr Emile Allgeyer, who was home from East Africa, should come over to Ireland to perform the ceremony. He had done his secondary studies at Blackrock, 1874-78.

The bishop arrived in time to perform the first ordination on St Patrick's Day 1900 in Rockwell chapel, which was dedicated to the national apostle. This was the first ordination ceremony to be held in the chapel. It was followed by another ordination on 25 March and the third on the Saturday of Passiontide. As Archbishop Croke was indisposed at this period he asked Mgr Allgeyer to deputise for him at the ceremonies of Holy Week and the ordinations for his senior seminary. Fr Botrel in his reports to Paris waxed eloquent in praise of Allgeyer's excellent performance, having charmed all, clergy and laity alike. The Bishop returned to Dublin and celebrated pontifical High Mass at Blackrock College.²⁷

Discussions arose about the delayed ordination of the three third-year students who had been asked to serve as prefects for one hour a day in the College - Joseph Shanahan, Philip O'Shea and John Byrne. Mgr Allgeyer volunteered to perform a further ordination ceremony for them at Blackrock. Shanahan, who had already been ordained Deacon, was given the go-ahead by the Director, Fr Meistermann; the other two were not. The Director felt he had to register a strong protest against what he considered an irregularity in that the normal procedures of a senior seminary had not been observed in their case. This caused disappointment all round, but Fr Botrel wrote to the Mother House to have Shanahan's official papers for ordination sent on immediately, and in case they might not to arrive in time for Low Sunday, the first Sunday after Easter, he asked that a telegram be sent with the two words: "Shanahan oui." if they had agreed to the ordination. Botrel explained that such a ceremony at Blackrock would have a striking effect as had the ordinations recently performed at Rockwell. He mentioned that he was calling on the Vicar General in the Diocese to have the ordination ceremony authorised at local level but added that he did not foresee any problem.

Mgr Allgeyer was staying in the recently-acquired house beside the College, namely Clareville, where Fr Ebenrecht was Superior. In a letter written later by Shanahan to Ebenrecht he thanks him sincerely 'for going to so much trouble about having my name connected with one of the great events that took place in the College.' Shanahan's ordination was seen by Fr Ebenrecht in particular as a great event as it was the first ordination to take place in the college chapel, which he had designed and built, and because the ceremony was performed by the first student of the college to be ordained bishop. Mgr Allgeyer was a cousin of Fr Ebenrecht, who had personally brought him as a student to Blackrock in 1874.

Unfortunately no contemporary account of the Shanahan ordination ceremony has been traced. Had Fr Ebenrecht been residing in the college at the time he would have revelled in recording that historic event in the community journal which he had started away back in 1884 but which had been neglected in his absence. When he returned to the community again some months later he tried to write up the journal retrospectively. His entry for 22 April 1900 is limited to one line: 'Fr Shanahan's ordination. *Missa Solemnis Pontific...*' He then inserts the letter written by Fr Shanahan months later, 25 Jan. 1901, acknowledging his indebtedness to the college. It reads as follows:

Dear Fr Ebenrecht,

My ordination took place in Blackrock Chapel on 22nd April (Low Sunday). Blackrock will ever in my fondest recollection be linked with the happiest day of my life. I must thank you very sincerely for going to so much trouble about having my name connected with one of the great events that took place in the College. I remain dear Fr Ebenrecht, With respect, your aff. confrère in J & M, J Shanahan.

As we try to piece together the ceremony from various other sources we know from the *État du Personnel* for 1900 that music and singing in the school were taken care of by the Director of the juniorate, Fr John Kearney, assisted by the recently ordained Fr Alphonsus Murphy. One of their favourite choral pieces for special occasions was the extract from Gounod's 'Redemption' containing the words of Isaiah: "lovely appear over the mountains the feet of them that preach..." Looking into the future for a moment, it was Fr Kearney who in 1920 was to urge Fr Jim Burke to compose the 'Missionary Hymn' in time for Bishop Shanahan's episcopal ordination at Maynooth College, and not surprisingly they turned to Gounod's 'Redemption' for their

inspiration, incorporating that same passage from Isaiah together with the Ascension and Pentecost themes. Fr Burke was himself present at Shanahan's ordination at Blackrock - being a prefect at that time and a member of the choir. And Fr Alphonsus Murphy must have taken a very special interest in the preparation of the choir for the ordination as he had been a close friend of Mgr Allgeyer while prefecting in Trinidad where Fr Allgeyer was then a member of the staff of St Mary's College.

Again as we consult the *État* for 1900 we learn that the man responsible for supervising liturgical ceremonies was Fr Ferdinand Senger, a past student and a native of Germany. It is possible, however, that the Master of Ceremonies on this occasion could have been one of the directors of the senior scholasticate in Rockwell as one of them would have to be present to reply to the official questions being asked by the ordaining prelate about the suitability of the candidate for ordination. Most likely Fr John Desnier did the honours as Sacred Liturgy was his portfolio. Furthermore he was quite familiar with Blackrock being a past student of the college and having served on the staff in recent years. He and Shanahan would have arrived at Blackrock the previous day to take part in the necessary rehearsal of the ceremony.

In the account of events at Blackrock for the period 1898-1900 sent for publication in the *Bulletin Général* of the Congregation, there is mention of the ordinations in Cashel on 20 November 1898 of two past Blackrock men, Alphonsus Murphy (1883-88) and John McGrath (1889-93). Fr Murphy had said his first Mass in Blackrock College chapel the following day at which his mother and several of the family and friends attended. Having referred to this as a 'very special family feast', the account goes on to say that the experience was repeated when Fr Shanahan was ordained on 22 April 1900 by Mgr Allgeyer; the following day his first Mass was attended by his uncle Br Adelm and 'many members from among their relatives'.²⁸

As both parents were still alive, it is to be presumed that they travelled to Dublin for the event, staying overnight at accommodation arranged by their daughter Mary, a teacher, who was in lodgings at Bessboro Terrace off North Circular Road. Who the others among "the many members from among the relatives" we cannot say for certain. John and Gerald were still in the country but were soon to leave for Australia. They are on record as having left on 22 December 1900 arriving in Victoria the following February. It is thought that they were following in the footsteps of their elder brother Michael who had been a student at Blackrock. Finally, one wonders if among the family group at the ordination was Mary's fiancé Michael Dawson of Maynooth whom she was to marry in a few months time. Fr Shanahan and Brother Adelm would have stayed at the College or Clareville.

The community journal referring to another first mass at the College two months later, that of Fr Zindt, a colleague of Shanahan in Rockwell added that "the whole house assisted." As we presume the same happened for Fr Shanahan's first Mass it may be of interest to single out a few others who were present on that occasion. There was the president of the College, Fr John T Murphy, and the Bursar, Fr John Neville, both of whom were to serve as missionary bishops. Among the students were John D'Alton who was destined to be one day Primate of Ireland and Cardinal. As one peruses the Bursar's journal jottings of the occasion we find no reference to anyone being billed for any expenses incurred, but among the schoolboys who came to the Bursar for pocket money was E de Valera. He is debited for the princely sum of 6 pence! So we can add with the gift of hindsight that in attendance was the future President of Ireland! In fact when reminded of this in later years Dev recalled the event clearly and remarked how impressed the students were by the ceremony.²⁹

One noted student of that period, who may have been absent from the ordination, was day-student Frank Duff, but as class resumed the following day one can be sure he was among those who, following the age-old custom, presented themselves for Fr Shanahan's first blessing. Finally, of special interest is the fact that five of Shanahan's future missionaries in Nigeria were present as members of the Juniorate, namely Dan Walsh, Con Liddane, Frank Howell, Louis Ward, and novice brother Eusebius Aherne. Finally, it of interest to note that the next ordination to the priesthood held in the Blackrock College chapel (1926) was performed by Bishop Shanahan himself.

One can imagine that there was a very special homecoming when Fr Shanahan later said his first Mass in Templederry where his family resided, but for the moment it was most likely straight back to Rockwell to complete his theology studies. It was arranged that Philip O'Shea and John Byrne would be ordained later with the diocesan students in Cork.

End of year decisions

The newly ordained continued to follow their course of theological studies till the end of the scholastic year. Fr Shanahan needed all the time available to make up for the time he had missed from the normal theology course. He had begun his study of theology at Chevilly in autumn 1896 on returning from Langonnet where he had done Philosophy. Within a few months he was called on to go to Merville College to replace the teacher of English, Fr Joseph Lutz, late of Nigeria, who had just died. Shanahan returned to the scholasticate in Chevilly at the end of the school year only to find that, instead of continuing his theology, all were to begin their novitiate or spiritual year because of certain changes ordered by Rome. At the end of the novitiate year, as he looked forward to continuing his theology under the guidance of fellow countryman, Fr John O'Gorman, he got his unexpected assignment to Rockwell. Theological studies were not high on the list of priorities planned for him for the next few years.

All of this chopping and changing was going to leave Shanahan conscious for the rest of his life of his lack of a proper scholastic course in theology, especially when he was called on to address seminary students. In this, as in so many other aspects of his life, his work and his spirituality, he recalls to mind St Patrick who was also acutely conscious of his lack of formal training compared with those who were only too ready to criticise his manner of expression. In neither case was there ever the slightest doubt about the orthodoxy of their teaching. It was felt that their theology came more from the heart than from the head.

In the '*notes*' submitted by Fr Meistermann as director, 30 June 1900, there is what seems to be an *x* after Shanahan's and Zindt's mark for studies as if they were rather weaker than the others. His comment, summing up Shanahan's temperament, namely "*Est de l'avis des autres*", seems to imply that Shanahan was guided too much by what others thought rather than by his own convictions. It may well be that he was repeating in other words what Père Grizard had tried to express by the one word '*sensible*' - namely that Shanahan had an open mind and that he was ever ready to be influenced by what others thought rather than coming to rigid conclusions on his own. It would appear that Fr Meistermann had some doubts about Shanahan's health in this report; he brackets him with Fr Phil O'Shea in this context. Both these men were to live to a ripe old age! Again, Fr John McGrath, about whose studies he had some reservations, was to prove a brilliant mathematician and noted wit as he served in Rockwell for many years.

Fr Meistermann penned an in-depth and critical report on the senior scholasticate to Paris on 14 June 1900. Earlier he had expressed dissatisfaction with almost all aspects of that venture. He said: "They were asking for a separate scholasticate for years and now they say it was undertaken with undue haste. They have done too much talking; now they should begin to listen and to act and be ready to make sacrifices if the Province is to thrive."³⁰

July 1st saw the culminating ceremony of the students' formation period, namely the solemn ceremony known as the 'Consecration to the Apostolate'. In the senior scholasticate at Chevilly this was always a moving ceremony ending with the singing of the *Adieu Frères* – Farewell Brothers - on the steps of the old Chateau, then the centre of the college. Normally during that ceremony in the church, presided over by the Superior General, Mgr Le Roy, the young priests received their first appointments, thus giving this ceremony a special *cachet* for each. The ceremony at Rockwell must have been on a more modest scale. It was the first such to be held at the Rockwell senior scholasticate. It was also to be the last.

By summer most people were convinced that the scholasticate should be suspended, that Rockwell was not a suitable location, that the staff were not up to the task, that the best Irishmen for such a job had been sent to USA and Portugal, and that there had not been any proper financial support - the only community helping being Rockwell. The financial situation was now so bad that there were no suitable clothes for going out available for these young men when they had to doff their soutanes! There was a general consensus that the Province needed a new administration and that the Superior General should come over and lay down the law in many spheres. The Provincial, Fr Jules Botrel, a man of peace, was felt not to be capable of giving the leadership required.

In mid-August 1900, Mgr Le Roy agreed that his presence in Ireland was urgently required. Pressed for time he could remain on only for a few days – 16th to 20th August. Having listened to what various people had to say about the financial and other aspects of the Province, he made several decisions. Fr Larry Healy, who had retired from being Superior of Blackrock the previous year because of ill health, was called on to take on the duties of Provincial; Fr Botrel was appointed local superior of the newly acquired house at Clareville adjoining Blackrock College. The Provincial superior was also to reside in Clareville from then on rather than in the College as had been the custom since the days of Père Leman (1860-80). Clareville, known as St Patrick's, was also to be the new Mission House catering for missionaries and the members of the Mission Band – namely the group of preachers who undertook missions throughout the country on request while also doing some promotion work for the foreign missions.³¹

The senior scholasticate at Rockwell was suspended for the moment and the juniorate was restored there. As a beginning of the building up of an Irish Province centre of formation of aspirants it was hoped to open a novitiate for Brothers in Clareville. Fr John T. Murphy, returned from Pittsburgh the previous year had been appointed Superior at Blackrock in succession to Fr Healy, and already he had plans to make major changes there. The future of St Mary's College, Rathmines, was in the balance. Because of its financial problems many wanted it closed, but as there was no other religious society available to fill the void, it was felt that the Congregation owed it to the parents and the local church that a school be kept open in that area. The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr William Walsh, did not want to see the school abandoned. The only solution was to appoint a dynamic headmaster to revive its fortunes. Dr Crehan had expressed the wish to be changed from Rockwell after ten taxing years

there. He was appointed to St Mary's as Superior. This left a double vacancy in Rockwell as he had been holding at least two posts, Dean of studies and Dean of discipline. Two of those newly ordained were called on to take Dr Crehan's place - Fr John Byrne, to take charge of studies, and Fr Joseph Shanahan to take over as Dean of the boarding school.³²

From Shanahan's own statements to date, one can safely say that the last thing he wanted was to be a functionary and professor in a school in Ireland. We can be sure that Mgr Le Roy knew Shanahan's mind on the matter, even if all this had not been put in writing, as was customary in the letter requesting the privilege of making one's Apostolic Consecration. Shanahan's letter has not been traced to date. One can be sure that he made his views known to Mgr Le Roy on receiving his appointment for Rockwell in mid-August 1900. We have no record of that encounter but one can imagine Le Roy telling him: 'I was just as keen as you are to go on the missions after my ordination but I had to give two years service in Cellule in return for my education. I ask you to do the same.' That this is not all speculation will be clear from a statement in Mgr Le Roy's letter two years later when fixing the appointments for the missions. He said: 'I know of course that I can count on Shanahan also.' Rockwell was also to receive Fr Patrick Walsh from St Mary's and Fr Henry Blanchot who had been until recently at Epinal College from which the Congregation was withdrawing as part of the restructuring forced by conditions in France.

Dean of Discipline 1900-02

Fr Shanahan was now aged 29. He was in the prime of life and in excellent health. He needed to be. He was now responsible for the care of the boarding school and for the discipline of 215 students in all matters outside classroom hours. This covered not merely the care and supervision of dormitories, dining room, recreation areas, etc, inside the house, but also all concerning games, recreation and sorties outside the college grounds. He had, of course, helpers, especially the Brothers and Prefects, but the buck landed on his desk for all their functions.

There were nine 'prefects', in the college at the time, some coming straight from the juniorate with no previous training; others like Thomas McDonagh had been prefecting before Shanahan had arrived from France. The names of all these prefects were to be familiar from the posts they occupied in the Irish Province in later years: Richard Harnett, later Provincial; John Heelan, later Dean of discipline in Blackrock; Leonard Graf - a pillar of St Mary's, Trinidad, for half a century; Charles Meyer, a well-known and beloved 'character' in various communities, especially Blackrock; James Murphy - for many years professor of Dogmatic theology in Kimmage (Or was it the other James Murphy who was from Waterford and who did his novitiate with Fr Daniel Brottier, 1903/4, served in Sierra Leone and died 1911?); Bill Keane of Sierra Leone and Blackrock etc.; Dan Egan, later of Rockwell; Frank Howell, later closely associated with Shanahan in Nigeria; Martin Mahony, later known for his involvement with the cause of the Irish language; John Leen - brother of the three priests from Abbeyfeale - (He was to die in August 1902 while prefect), and Thomas McDonagh of 1916 fame, who was to part (amicably) with the Congregation at the end of the 1901 academic year. Br Adelm, Shanahan's uncle, is listed in the *État* as 'prefect and professor'.³³

Apart from his duties as Dean it would appear that Fr Shanahan had a pretty full day's class - his subjects being listed as Latin, Greek, French and Mathematics. As all of these were key subjects in the highly competitive public examinations,

Shanahan had quite a heavy workload. And besides all these time-consuming duties we find him listed as 'Prefect of Health' for the community and school. This meant that he was principally responsible for overseeing the medical care of the sick, contacting the local medical doctor in Cashel etc. The actual infirmary work was attended to by Br Agricole Kennedy.

The Dean of Studies, Fr Johnny Byrne, was also new to his job but he had been prefect in Rockwell for several years. One innovation introduced by him was a strong emphasis on the use of the Irish language. This was to show its effect in the scholars of that period, Cormac O Cadhlaigh, later professor of Modern Irish in UCD; Michael Joseph McGrath, specialist in Celtic Studies and later Archbishop of Cardiff; Henry Gogarty, later missionary bishop, who as a prefect was enthusiastic in giving lessons in Irish to Eamon de Valera and others. It is not known if Fr Shanahan picked up any knowledge of the language. His problem on returning from eleven years' exile in France had been to revive his fluency in English but by 1900 that presented no problem.

Both Deans addressed the assembled students periodically from the vantage point of their respective interests. A later generation of students would recall Fr Byrne's talks on character-building, using an image he could not easily have called on in 1900, namely the similarity between our fallen human nature and a motor car with an inbuilt bias to the left or right. Fr Shanahan's talks seem to have been something out of the ordinary and not readily forgotten. Fr Edward Leen, a student in those days, recalled his impressions of those talks over forty years later and though his recollections were naturally influenced by hindsight Fr Leen was not the man to give a fictional account of such matters:

It must be confessed that the future missionary was not at home in this task. He felt cramped by the narrow horizons of school life. His soul craved for adventure. Not that he failed to address himself to the task on hand with his customary energy and zeal. He laboured to enkindle in the souls of the students something of the lofty idealism and deep religious spirit, which he had brought with him from France. For him, loyalty to Christ and to all that Christ marked with His authority and approval lifted the ordinary tasks and duties of school-life above the commonplace and transfigured them with divine meaning. The writer of this notice was a student of the time and still hears the echoes of those burning words that betrayed the lofty Christian idealism of the young priest's soul. He also remembers with sadness that there was but a poor response to that idealism, though deep in their hearts the less thoughtless amongst the students justified the outlook of the Dean and condemned their own. If he was but ill-appreciated, they recognised that it was not his fault but theirs.³⁴

Again, on another occasion, Fr Leen recalled his impressions of Shanahan in similar terms:

'I can visualise him on the rostrum in the study hall - his fine appearance, fearless, but always with a thoughtful, inward look on his face; he seemed to be contemplating something within. The tone of his instruction was entirely different from the usual instructions on such occasions; it was very idealistic. He evidently contemplated a world where all was honour and principle. He appealed for conformity to the rules not for fear of chastisement, but from the loyalty and allegiance of a Christian boy. I contrasted all this with the mentality of the world in which we moved; I found it tragic that he, so spiritual, so lofty in outlook, should be in charge of us. I felt he was in

advance of his age, and that a great deal of what he said was lost on us. I admired him and his view. I felt the shock it must be to one of his fine sensibility to be dealing with our earthiness.³⁵

In private conversation Fr Leen was even more explicit in his recollections of these addresses to the students by Shanahan, stating that he felt so much on fire as it were by the ideals and the enthusiasm of the speaker that he found he could with difficulty fall off to sleep at night recalling Shanahan's words and delivery.

Unfortunately little by way of contemporary material about Rockwell at this period is to hand. This is the account of the students published in the report on Rockwell published in the *Bulletin Général* of the Congregation:

The spirit of piety among our students keeps pace with their zest for studies and sport. At least 160 approach the altar each week and their devotion is not by any means superficial; it is solid and practical. 154 of them are members of the Sodality of Our Lady, a large number are members of the Apostolate of Prayer and the Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart etc.

The school supplies also a goodly number of vocations to the priestly and religious life, and we are glad to report a very noticeable movement in favour of our own Congregation. In fact all the junior scholastics at the moment except one new arrival are former boarders at the college. Others have asked to be admitted but we prefer at the moment to allow their vocation to ripen where they are. We must also recall that three of our students have gone directly from the college to the novitiate in France having completed their secondary studies...³⁶

The only contemporary references to Fr Shanahan during his first year as Dean are to be found in outside documents. First the register of Aughrim St Church, Dublin, giving the record of Mary Shanahan's marriage to Joseph Dawson of Maynooth, 7 November 1900, mentions that the officiating celebrant was Fr Joseph Shanahan. This was the first ceremony performed by Fr Shanahan for a member of his own family. One presumes there was a family reunion on that occasion, especially as John and Gerald were planning to set off in a few weeks to Australia.

Next mentions of Fr Shanahan are in the Blackrock community journal kept by Fr Ebenrech, and interestingly on both occasions he mistakenly refers to him as Fr 'Danagher' thus displaying a foreigner's difficulty in dealing with Irish surnames. For 17 January 1901 he has this entry: 'Some Rockwell boys with Fr Shanahan came up to play tomorrow for Leinster v Munster.' One of the Dean's jobs was to train the senior rugby team and travel with them to out matches. We shall meet Fr Shanahan in that capacity once again for the following year.

Here it is worth mentioning that Fr Ebenrech availed of Fr Shanahan's visit to Blackrock to ask him to write him a brief letter recording the fact of his ordination at Blackrock in order to have it inserted in the journal which he was trying to fill in for the period when he was Superior of Clareville. Ebenrech's next reference to Fr Shanahan was to record his presence at Blackrock College at the end of June 1901 for the annual retreat for the priests of the Province being conducted in French by the French Provincial, Fr Bernard Gerrer. The lectures were given in No 5 parlour, later to be known as 'The Nile' because of the murals painted by German Br Fulbert Heim depicting scenes from the mission where he had worked in East Africa. At the close of that retreat, on 30 June, Frs Joseph Shanahan, Bernard Carey and John Stephens pronounced their perpetual vows. So Fr Shanahan made his definitive commitment in the Congregation at the altar where he had been ordained priest and had said his first mass the previous year.

Fr Shanahan returned to Rockwell to prepare for another year as Dean and one can be certain that a part of the summer was spent in attending to repairs and refurbishment of the boarding school facilities. They badly needed a new wing, linking the science block and dormitories with the new chapel. By the time that project was completed and the news of it reached Fr Shanahan in Nigeria, it must have sounded just as an echo from the distant past.

A brief entry in the records of the Rockwell community council minutes states: "Mr Shanahan asks for an increase in salary. Fr S. suggests that a bonus of £10 be promised him making his salary equal to that of Mr (Bob) Walker."

One presumes that this entry refers to Fr Shanahan's brother Dick, who features in the 1898-99 senior rugby photograph with Joseph and the Ryan brothers, Mike and Jack, internationals. That there were three of the Shanahan clan on the teaching staff then - including Br Adelm, was a far cry from the days when Joseph was the sole Irish student in the whole school in Cellule. Dick Shanahan, incidentally, was to qualify as a doctor, practising in England all his life and only retiring to his native Tipperary at the end of his career.

As accommodation in the college was at a premium at this stage it is noted in the community records that some of the lay-staff had to be lodged in the Lake House i.e. St Joseph's. There were as yet only 23 junior scholastics in the Lake House being looked after by Fr Hugh Evans, who was also responsible for the direction of the various sodalities or prayer groups in the college.

Part of the playing grounds used by the junior scholastics had been given over to the college for an indefinite period by the Ryan brothers who lived close by. A note in the community council book for October 1901 states that all the Fathers had been invited to Mike Ryan's wedding. The closest relations existed between the Ryans and the Rockwell community. Mike, in particular, seems to have spent much of his time fraternising with the prefects and lay staff where rugby was the common bond. And it would appear from tradition that Mike's house had an open door and a welcome for a game of cards, a flutter on the horses, a glass of punch etc. Shooting expeditions were regularly organised from there and all had such happy memories of these 'get-togethers' that they were nostalgically recalled by Eamon de Valera in the letter he wrote to Mike as he awaited sentence of execution for his part in the 1916 Rising.³⁷ One can be sure that Fr Shanahan was no stranger to one of the more famous of 'the homes of Tipperary', and even if he could not absent himself from his duties as Dean to attend the wedding, we can be fairly certain that he managed to 'nip' out later to pay his respects.

From Fr Ebenrecht's journal we learn that early in October 1901 Blackrock was host to two notable guests: The Earl of Pembroke and Fr Francis-Xavier Lichtenberger, a missionary from Nigeria. The Earl of Pembroke's visit was to lead to the transformation of Williamstown and the frontage of Blackrock College. It was thought by some that Lichtenberger's visit to Ireland, and to Rockwell in particular, was used by the Holy Spirit as a stepping-stone towards the transformation of the church in Southern Nigeria. We deal here with Fr Lichtenberger's visit.

Fr F.X. Lichtenberger, a native of the Vosges country in France, had spent seven years as a student in Blackrock (1881-88). After his ordination he asked to be sent to a mission where his English could be used to advantage. His appointment in 1893 to Nigeria was due to the presence in France at that time of Fr Joseph Lutz, Prefect Apostolic of Nigeria - the man, incidentally, whom Shanahan was to replace two years later as teacher of English in Merville College where Lutz was appointed when he returned seriously ill from Nigeria. While home previously from Nigeria in

1893 Fr Lutz had spent some weeks in Ireland in search of funds and personnel for his hard-pressed mission. During his visit to Rockwell he had been delighted to secure the services of Br David Doran, cook and kitchen gardener at the college for many years. To Br David from Aherlow goes the distinction of being the first Irish Spiritan to serve in Nigeria. The recruitment by Fr Lutz at this stage of Fr Lichtenberger and Br David was a great boon to the mission schools because of their command of English.

In August 1898, when Shanahan was about to resume his theology course at St Joseph's, Rockwell, Fr René Pawlas, the newly appointed Prefect Apostolic of Nigeria, called to Ireland to brush up his English and collect whatever help he might find for his vast mission. Most likely Joseph Shanahan made his acquaintance that summer in Rockwell. Fr Pawlas, however, was not destined to serve for long in Nigeria; he followed Fr Lutz to an early grave, dying in 1900 at the age of 34. It was at the request of his successor, Fr Leon Lejeune, that Fr Lichtenberger was now in Ireland pleading the cause of Nigeria.

Fr F X Lichstenberger

Fr Ebenrecht has this entry in the Blackrock community journal for Sunday, 29 September, 1901: 'High Mass for the closing of the boys' retreat. Sung by Fr Lichtenberger. He has a splendid voice and presents very well. He is a great missionary and a credit to his alma mater, Blackrock.' A week later he wrote: 'Fr Lichtenberger gave a lecture on Africa with magic lantern projections...He explained the views shown by Fr O'Toole. The entertainment was very interesting. Africa in Ireland; the Blacks in Blackrock.' For 11 October he has this entry: 'Fr Lichtenberger left for Rockwell. The boys requested him to get a half day for them but he was afraid to ask; the small boys collected a little money for his Mission, for which he expressed his most sincere thanks.'

There seems to be no contemporary account of Fr Lichtenberger's visit to Rockwell, but years later Fr James Mellet, who was a student at the time, had this to say in his book, *If any man Dare*:

It was as a Junior Grade boarder, in 1901, that I heard for the first time, at first hand, of the African missions of the Holy Ghost Fathers. An Alsatian Father from Nigeria, Father Lichtenberger, was invited to give the boys a talk. For an hour the bearded visitor spoke to us of the establishment of the Congregation by the Venerable Libermann, and of the terrible adversities suffered by the first missionaries to West Africa. He told us of Sierra Leone - the 'White Man's Grave' - and of the founding of the mission to Nigeria in 1885. He told us too of Brother David from the Glen of Aherlow (He was afterwards tragically killed by a tram outside Blackrock College on his first leave home) and of Brother Othrain Casey of Mitchelstown who had gone to Nigeria from Rockwell in 1901. Last of all he spoke of the new residence he himself had just opened - the fourth in Nigeria - at Igbariam, only twelve miles from where I am writing this.

It is no exaggeration to say that the effect of Father Lichtenberger's talk was sensational. It ran around the school next day like fire in dry grass.³⁸ Shortly after his visit to Rockwell, Fr Lichtenberger set off for America where, in spite of the ill-health which forced him quit Nigeria for the moment, he raised ca £1,500 (£25,000 today).

There is no account of the effect Fr Lichtenberger's lecture had on the Dean of discipline at Rockwell in 1901. It did not need an illustrated talk to turn Shanahan's

attention to Africa. As we have seen his mind and heart were already in Africa many years before. But this contact with Lichtenberger may have helped him make up his mind that Africa was definitely calling him once obedience pointed that way. It was said that he wrote immediately to Mgr Le Roy to be released from his duties but if he did there is no trace of that letter in the General Archives of the Congregation. Mgr Le Roy knew his mind well already. But the Lord works through the normal course of events. In this case there was a little bit more than normal in those events perhaps.

Hiring a Train

One of Fr Shanahan's duties as Dean was to act as manager of the Senior rugby team. This occasionally called for journeys outside Rockwell. We find in the Blackrock College community records that Fr Shanahan stayed at the College when he travelled with the members of the team who played on a representative side. The records of the Blackrock Rugby Club for 1900-01 mention a telegram sent to Fr Shanahan, no doubt about a fixture between the senior club teams. The secretary of the Blackrock Club at the time, Willie Martin, had been well known to Shanahan as he had been a brilliant student in Rockwell during Shanahan's time as prefect.

A brief entry in the community council records at Rockwell refers to the unsuitability of St Patrick's Day for a football match in Cork. The community council voted against it. To put that decision in context one must remember that to get to Cork from Rockwell and back would take the whole day in those times, as it would mean travelling by horse and car to Limerick Junction to catch a train from Dublin. Having their priorities right they wanted the proper celebration of the national feast day to begin with Mass. Football must not rule supreme.

But that football match was important and the Dean of discipline more than anyone else carried the responsibility for seeing that all was done to achieve success. What happened on the day of that match is best told by a student of the time - Edward Leen:

The college Rugby team, of which the Dean of discipline had charge, had a fixture in 1902 with a Cork team. The venue was in Cork itself. At that time the College team, in order to reach the south, had to make a long journey of 14 miles by car to Limerick Junction. On this particular day the transport arrangements miscarried, and when the players arrived at the Limerick Junction they found to their dismay that the train for Cork had left. The situation seemed desperate. The match was an important one. The followers of the game in Cork looked forward to it with eagerness and large crowds were expected. A wire announcing the '*impasse*' evoked a reply that was a cry of consternation. The Station Master, on being consulted, said the only possibility open was to charter a special from Dublin, but, of course, that would involve considerable expense. With characteristic generosity of spirit, Father Shanahan said that honour was involved in fulfilling an important engagement and expense could not be allowed to weigh against that. The decision was taken. The wires were set going. The line was cleared. The driver, having nothing to handle but the engine, the tender and a saloon carriage for the football team, made a record run from Dublin to the Junction and from the Junction to Cork. Prompt on time the Dean led his players on the Mardyke field amidst roars of applause, for news of his splendid sportsmanship had reached the grounds. The Rockwell team won the match, and Father Shanahan was overwhelmed with congratulations for the victory and for the generous decision that prepared the way for it. The home

authorities, however, did not share the enthusiasm of the sporting world. They were not to be blamed. The Dean's fund, which had to meet the expense of a special train, had received a set-back from which it did not recover for years.³⁹

As this incident is probably the best-known anecdote about Shanahan's pre-Nigerian days we give another version of it for the record - again related by Fr Leen:

Another recollection I have of him is of his taking the team to play a match in Cork. In those days they used to travel to the station in horse-drawn vehicles. Father Shanahan was in charge of the team. In his peculiar and characteristic way he was marked by that inward, serious look; there was a stamp of nobility about him. Yet he was thorough in everything he did. At Limerick Junction they found that they were late; the train had gone! What were they to do? The League match was important - the Constitution team were awaiting them. They wired back that everything was ready, the match had been advertised, the people were expecting them...

Meanwhile Father Shanahan made enquiries at the station; he explained everything. The stationmaster said there was only one thing to do, only one way out of the difficulty; the line was clear and a special train could be got down from Kingsbridge (Heuston Station); but this would be very expensive and so was practically impossible. Father Shanahan said it was not impossible; they were pledged to the match and expense was nothing compared to honour - so, wire for the train! At Kingsbridge there was great enthusiasm; a special driver, engine and carriage were got out and in two hours had arrived at Limerick Junction. Father Shanahan wired to Cork that they were coming. The people were already gathering on the field and great were the cheers and enthusiasm when they were informed that the Rockwell team was coming in spite of everything. They came, and won! They returned in triumph to Rockwell, and all the South of Ireland was loud in praise of them.⁴⁰

As Dr Shanahan's cause for Beatification is being introduced, no doubt the '*advocatus diaboli*' will fasten on that 'error of judgement' at Limerick Junction; but if, in spite of it, Shanahan is raised to the altar, there is no doubt that there will be a move to have him appointed patron of the followers of the oval ball!

It has been suggested that the train incident precipitated Shanahan's departure from Rockwell to Nigeria. There is no evidence to support this view. And as to the bill of costs for hiring the train, according to one source, it had not to be met from the Dean's fund. Br Kevin Healy, who had lived close to Shanahan in Nigeria from 1907 to 1920, had this to say about the incident when he recorded some of his memories of Shanahan in later years:

He was most popular with the boys at this time in Rockwell. He always treated them as men, and with great consideration and fairness. On account of this, as by reason of his great prowess at games, the boys worshipped him. On the famous occasion that he took the team by "special train" to Cork, the team raised the money to pay for that train and the college was at no expense. And one must remember that the team included among its members the veteran Ryan brothers of international fame. The fact that they were strong farmers would have influenced the financial outlay involved.⁴¹

There is no definite record of Fr Shanahan having visited his family during these years in Rockwell, though one can be sure that he did. One sad family event occurred that must have caused him great pain. Early in 1902 he received news from England that his sister Maggie who was training in England to be a teacher had died of typhus.

He made the journey to England to assist at the funeral ceremonies.
Departure for Nigeria

As we try to piece together the facts about Shanahan's departure from Rockwell for Nigeria we list the following details from contemporary documents. First, one notices from the list of those attending the annual retreat preached by Père Grizard in Blackrock, June 1902, that the Rockwell Deans, Frs Byrne and Shanahan, are not among them. Naturally they would be the two whose presence would be required at Rockwell until the public examinations were over and all students had gone home. As soon as the retreat had ended, Père Grizard made a flying visit to Rockwell, 'accompanied by Fr John T. Murphy and dressed in Irish clerical attire which was greatly admired', as we are told by Fr Ebenrech. Père Grizard would normally never have been seen without the regulation soutane. Shanahan then would have had an opportunity to meet his old friend and it is possible that, as Grizard was First Assistant to the Superior General at the time, the matter of his possible appointment to Nigeria would have been discussed.

Apropos the persistent but unproved suggestion that the Rockwell authorities were glad to see the back of Fr Shanahan for one reason or another, it will be of interest to quote once again from Br Kevin Healy's reminiscences based on hearsay in Nigeria, possibly from Shanahan himself.

When he was made Dean of Discipline after ordination, Fr Shanahan had many "palavers" with the authorities, as he introduced many "innovations". It seems that at that time, Catechism was not taught there. Fr Shanahan said he could not possibly undertake the position of Dean unless the boys received religious instruction, at least on Sundays and Wednesdays! And he got his way.

As a result of the palavers, the Superior one day said to him; "You cannot go on like this; you will have to be sent to the Missions." Fr Shanahan promptly answered: "That is just what I want - to go to the Missions." "Then write to the Superior General and tell him so" was the reply. Fr Shanahan wrote to Mgr Le Roy, offering himself for Sierra Leone or any foreign mission, French or English, anywhere - except Nigeria.⁴²

Br Kevin's version may have a kernel of truth in it, but one sees from elsewhere that he likes to round off his stories with some striking note not necessarily based on the bare facts.

The first clear intimation we find of Shanahan being earmarked for the missions is in a letter dated 17 July 1902 from Mgr Le Roy to the Provincial, Fr Larry Healy. He mentions those detailed for overseas appointments and then concludes his list with the words: '*Je compte toujours sur le P. Shanahan*', reminding Fr Healy that he was still counting on Shanahan as being among those having been already discussed at some earlier date, probably during Fr Grizard's visit.⁴³ It is not till a month later that we find Fr Healy referring to this proposed appointment in his correspondence with Paris, on 19 August, where he says he is awaiting a letter from Shanahan before letting him know for definite that he was actually appointed to the missions. Later he adds:

'If McGrath (the future Archbishop of Cardiff, that is) is not being sent to Rome, send him to us; we are losing Fr Shanahan (perhaps)' So even at that date Fr Shanahan's appointment was not absolutely sure.

One presumes it was to clear up whatever doubt might have remained about his appointment that Fr Shanahan came up from Rockwell to Clareville, Blackrock, to confer personally with the Provincial. They met actually at Blackrock College on

Sunday, 7 September, as the school was celebrating the opening of the new school year. For that date we read in Fr Ebenrecht's community journal:

Exposition after High Mass 9.30. Celebrant Fr Keawell, D., Fr Senger, S.D., Fr Phil O'Shea. Adoration all day till evening. Benediction. Fr Provincial dined here, also Fr Rooney of Portugal and his brother, Fr Daniel Lynch, newly ordained father, and two gentlemen cousins of his and Mr Richard Cruise and his brother, and Fr Shanahan from Rockwell.

One can presume that Fr Shanahan was still acting as Dean of the boarding school for the opening of the school year and smoothing the way for his successor, Fr Joe Baldwin, recently arrived from the senior seminary in France. Once his appointment to Nigeria was settled he was put in contact with Fr Patrick McDermott, a native of Mullinahone, Co. Tipperary, who had worked for years in the USA, but was then being allowed to transfer to Nigeria at the age of forty-three.

Fr McDermott was staying at Clareville as he finalised arrangements for himself, Fr Shanahan, and the newly professed Br Eusebius Aherne, who had returned from Chevilly. Staying at the college also were those preparing to leave for Sierra Leone: Frs Dan Lynch and William Keane; these latter two dined with the junior scholastics at the request of the director Fr John Kearney. Br Othrain Casey, who had been professed in Chevilly with Br Eusebius, had already set out for Nigeria early in May.

For the actual departure of the missionaries we are indebted again to Fr Ebenrecht, who for many years in the past had busied himself with seeing to the needs of men leaving for and coming from the missions:

9 October 1902. Fr McDermott said the boys' Mass and preached. Departure, for Africa via Liverpool by the 8 o'clock boat from North Wall, tonight, of the missionaries for the L. Niger, Fathers P Mc Dermott and Shanahan and Br Eusebius, and for Sierra Leone, Fathers D Lynch and Keane. Formerly the missionaries left from Blackrock; this time they had been invited to Clareville to dinner, and they started from Clareville. Nothing whatever was done here for them. Fr McDermott only passed here to take Br Eusebius away before he could say goodbye to anyone. Clareville gave a dinner in honour of the missionaries. The Superior of Rathmines and Fr John Stephens were invited. No invitation for anyone of the college here. Verily, Blackrock was forgotten with more than a wilful oversight. The pony only had the honour to bring the luggage of the travellers to the Liverpool boat, and the Bursar to advance the money to bring the missionaries to Africa.

One can sympathise with Fr Ebenrecht, who had for years done so much for the cause of the foreign missions, to find that he was completely sidelined on this occasion. On checking the Bursar's entries for that day we find that he debited £81 to Fr McDermott for the voyage to Nigeria. As he had done so often before, Fr Ebenrecht went to the boat to wish the missionaries Godspeed. He has this entry in his journal for 10 November:

Friday: The missionaries who left last night for Liverpool had evidently a very severe crossing. A violent storm raged all through the night from ENE with a great down pour of rain. Fr Ebenrecht saw them off at the North Wall; there were also Fr Stephens, Fr Keegan and Fr Con. O'Shea.

The hagiographer of old would have seen in this storm the wrath of Satan. Fr Shanahan was himself to sense his power many a time in moments of crisis in the years ahead. The party are on record as having set out 10 November from Liverpool, Frs Lynch and Keane for Sierra Leone and for Nigeria Frs McDermott and Shanahan,

and Br Eusebius.⁴⁴

It would appear that word reached the Mother House that matters had not been properly attended to by the Provincialate in Ireland in supplying the missionaries with all that was necessary for their voyage, their '*trousseau*' as it was normally known. There was a special department at the Mother House in Paris, the *Procure*, which had been long dealing with this aspect of a missionary's life. This being the first group to leave from the new Provincialate at Clareville, it was to be expected that there might be hitches, but in fact there seems to have been quite a misunderstanding. Who was to blame? Fr Grizard, the First Assistant, had written to Fr Healy informing his that Br Eusebius would be leaving leaving for Nigeria from Liverpool with Fr McDermott and that he should see to providing the necessary trousseau or inform the mission *Procure* immediately to deal with the situation.⁴⁵ Fr Healy's letter to Le Roy about the matter reads as follows:

I don't recall your Lordship having already asked if I had given their trousseau to Fr Shanahan and Br Eusebius. I don't find any reference to that matter in the correspondence. But here are the facts. When Fr Shanahan and Br Eusebius were listed to accompany Fr McDermott to Onitsha, Fr McDermott came to tell me he would take care of their trousseau and their tickets for the journey. I let him do so, limiting myself to asking from time to time had he actually undertaken this. He assured me that he expected to secure a considerable reduction and that he would arrange matters with the Motherhouse. On departure he said he would pick up their trousseau at Liverpool. Fr Browne, who met them at Liverpool, told me Fr McDermott was annoyed when he learned that the trousseau had been sent on directly to Onitsha by the Motherhouse.⁴⁶

So matters did not go smoothly for Shanahan as he started out on his first missionary journey.

¹ Cf. *Rockwell College Annual* 1964 pp 12ff; *Père Leman -Educator and Missionary* pp 196ff.. Among the staff employed at Rockwell by M. Thiébault were members of the O'Connor family who later were accommodated by Thiébault with a holding near Cashel. This family was to remain closely associated with both Rockwell and Blackrock College, and one of the girls, Mother Xavier, OP, was destined to play a leading role in the founding of Bishop Shanahan's congregation of missionary sisters - the Holy Rosary Sisters.

² RCA 1964 p.25f

³ For Fr Prosper Goepfert cf. *Irish Spiritans Remembered* No. 602; Père Amet Limbour, *ibid.* No.465

⁴ *Le Révérend Père Amet Limbour* by Jules Groell pp 73ff

⁵ BG XIX pp83ff; For Dr Edward Crehan cf. *ISR* No.4

⁶ *Bulletin Général de la Congrégation* Vol XVIII pp 130ff. Vol. XIX pp85ff; RCA 1964 p.26f; RCA 1976 pp 7ff

⁷ For Br Adelm cf. *ISR* No. 414

⁸ Grizard to Botrel 27 August 1897 p.5 IPArch File 1897

⁹ *ISR* No. 584

¹⁰ For brief biographies of all these contemporaries of Shanahan at Rockwell cf. *Irish Spiritans Remembered*

¹¹ HRS Archives

¹² *Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria* by John P Jordan p.5

¹³ *A Centenary Tribute to the Founder of the Holy Rosary Sisters 1871-1971* p.17

¹⁴ *If any man dare*, by James Mellett CSSp p.4

¹⁵ BG Vol. XIX p..85; Cf. Botrel's correspondence with the Mother House August 1897 SpArch

¹⁶ Shanahan personal dossier SpArch

¹⁷ Grizard to Botrel 09/05/98 F 98

¹⁸ IPArch

19 BG XX p. 70f

20 BG XIX pp 72ff; 254f; 345f

21 BX XX p. 63f

22 Eigenmann to Botrel 09/05/02; 03/11/02 IP Arch F 1898

23 Re: Rockwell College Re Rockwell College of BG XX Pp208,582; The Programme for the Christmas Concert 1899 advertised the remarkable academic successes of the school in recent years as follows:

Exhibitions (3 in Senior Grade)	19
Exhibitions retained	14
Gold Medals (in Senior Grade for 1st Place in the Grade and 1 st Place in Modern Languages)	2
Special Prize (£10 Senior Grade)	1
Composition Prizes	11
Book Prizes	29
Total Distinctions	76
112 Passed	

GENERAL RESULTS 1895-99

Students Passed 508

Distinctions Gained 304

NB In the Intermediate Examinations of 1899, Rockwell gained the First and Third Places in the Senior Grade; and with a grand total of 76 Distinctions headed the entire list of Irish schools. From 1895 to 1899 Rockwell, four years in succession, stood first among the Colleges of Ireland "passing" 508 students, and gaining for their benefit 304 Distinctions, viz:- 109 Exhibitions and 53 retained Exhibitions (varying in value from £20, £30, to £50 each), 4 Gold Medals (2 for Mathematics in Middle and Senior Grades, 1 for First Place in Senior Grade and 1 in the same Grade for Modern Languages), 44 prizes in Composition in various languages, 3 Commercial prizes, 3 Burke Memorial and special prizes, and 88 Book Prizes. In the Royal University also Rockwell gained several Exhibitions and high Distinctions, besides 2 Mathematical Scholarships & many Civil Service successes

24 Annual report on Seminary

25 Eigenmann visitation BG XX p.144

26 Meistermann report 1899-1990

27 BG XXI pp149f Allgeyer at Rockwell

28 BG XXI p.130 (ordination)

29 A Centenary Tribute p.5 Dev

30 Meistermann's final report

31 Meistermann report 1899-1990

32 BG XXI P.149f Rockwell 1900- BG XXII p.346f, 355

33 *Etat du Personnel* 1901 p.15f, 1902 p.15; for brief biographies of these men cf. *Irish Spiritans Remembered*

34 BG XXI P.149f Rockwell 1900- BG XXII p.346f, 355

35 Jordan, *ibid.* p 5f

36 BG XXI p.150f

37 *Dev and his Alma Mater* pp73ff, p.113

38 If any man dare by Fr James Mellet p.5 ; for Fr Lichtenberger cf. ISR No. 607

39 Studies 1944 - A Great Missionary by Edward Leen CSSp p. 149f..

40 Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria by John P Jordan CSSp (1971 ed.) p.6

41 Br Kevin (Fr John J Healy SMA) HRSArch

42 *Ibid.*; for brief biography of Br Kevin cf. ISR No.798

43 Le Roy to Larry Healy 17/07/02 F 1902

44 BG XXI p.685

45 Grizard to Healy 27/08/02 IAPArch F 1902

46 Healy to Le Roy 8 December 1902

Africa encountered 1902-1906



Fr Shanahan – Prefect Apostolic 1906

Though Fr Shanahan was new to Nigeria, Nigeria was not new to him. He had been well informed about the mission over the years from the accounts published regularly in the *Bulletin Général* and from the reports given by returned missionaries over the years while he was in France and later during his years in Rockwell. It could in a sense be said that Shanahan's life in the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and the Nigerian mission began at the same time. By the time Joseph Shanahan arrived in Beauvais in 1886 the new mission at Onitsha was just beginning under the leadership of Fr Joseph Lutz. And, apart from the fact that he was destined one day to continue and develop the work begun by Fr Lutz in Nigeria, when he was called for the first time to take on an official post in the Congregation, namely as teacher of English in the College of Merville in 1896, it was in succession to Fr Lutz who had taken on that post when he returned ill from Nigeria. Shanahan would have also met Lutz' successors as they called to Chevilly or visited Ireland. But this is jumping ten years ahead of the story of Nigeria.

The country we know today as Nigeria was part of the vast Vicariate of the Two Guineas entrusted in 1842 to the pastoral care of Irish-born Bishop Edward Barron and the men allocated to him by Fr Libermann. After Bishop Barron had resigned his post in the wake of the traumatic loss of his men, his wide-flung Vicariate was entrusted by Rome to the pastoral care of the Congregation. The first mission to be launched was that of Gabon where the sole survivors of Dr Barron's team set to work. Lack of personnel and the enormous mortality rate in West Africa prevented any rapid growth of missionary expansion. Members of the Irish Province had played a small role in the missions being operated in territories under British influence and where the English language was considered to be necessary in all work of administration and for schools. In the absence of sufficient British subjects, Frenchmen with a smattering of English continued to operate small missions. It was a ticklish situation when both the French and British governments were progressively along the west coast.¹

For a variety of reasons from the early eighties efforts were at last made by various interested parties to stake out areas of influence, be they for commerce or religion. Catholic missionaries began to explore conditions in the region of the great Niger river, especially as it afforded access to the interior of country. The Society of the African Missions founded in 1856 gradually were allocated by Rome portions of the original Vicariate of the Two Guineas, but by 1880 the principal missionaries were Protestants of various denominations. Eventually a missionary working in Sierra Leone, Fr Joseph Lutz, was deputed to head the new mission. He had the advantage of having a working knowledge of English and had worked in a country where the English were extending their influence.²

A station was opened at Onitsha and work began at setting up a Christian village composed of redeemed slaves who were mostly children, elderly women and infirm men. Medical care was dispensed and an elementary school opened. With the arrival of a community of Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny in November 1889 a care system was built up and gradually, although there were very few converts, the people began to realise that the missionaries were there not for commercial gain but in a caring mission.

As it became clearer that the English language was becoming more necessary, at least for those in charge, Fr Lutz made a point of visiting Ireland during his visit to Europe in 1893. He availed of his month's stay there to improve his English, collect

funds and enlist personnel. He had hoped to enlist the services of Brothers skilled in trades of various sorts. He was accorded two helpers, the newly-ordained Fr F.X. Lichtenberger and Brother David Doran, a member of the Rockwell community who had manned the kitchen and the vegetable garden for some years. Although a native of Alsace Fr Lichtenberger was fluent in English as he had spent seven years as a student at Blackrock College. These were to be the first English-speakers allocated to the mission and their presence was immediately felt.³

Ill health was the biggest problem for the mission. The death toll mounted. Fr Lutz himself had to return ill to France as we have seen, and his successors as heads of the mission – Frs Joseph Reling and Fr René Pawlas – lasted for only short periods. The mission was tending to stagnate for want of dynamic leadership.

At the start of the new century Mgr Le Roy decided it was time to make a fresh effort to get the mission in Nigeria also off to a new start. He took the risk of appointing as leader the redoubtable Père Leon Lejeune who had done wonders in the mission at Gabon but had to retire from there because of the mounting opposition to his methods. He was a man with vision and determination, a great worker himself but rather intolerant of those who were not able to keep in step with him.⁴ A frequent visitor to Chevilly he would have been known to the seminarians – among them Joseph Shanahan. Within a few years Fr Shanahan was to get to know him very well and although they were not to see eye to eye on all things Fr Shanahan was to retain a life-long, unbounded admiration for the real Fr Lejeune.

Appointed Prefect Apostolic of Southern Nigeria on 23 May 1900 Fr Lejeune's arrival in Nigeria was soon seen to make a big difference. His approach was very different from that of Fr Lutz. He set out to found a new church 'not on the dregs of the Christian village ghetto but from the elite of the local community'. He stated his policy as "We must begin with the head and the body will follow". Realising that proper accommodation was essential for the health of the missionaries and those sheltering at the mission station, Fr Lejeune got to work immediately to remedy this lacuna. He launched a building drive to house the Sisters and the various groups sheltering at the mission which had an orphanage and a leprosarium. He involved the women and the school children in this work. He appealed to France for skilled Brothers to be sent as there was an absence of skilled labour among the native population. Towards the end of 1902 he began work on a sizeable house for the Fathers and Brothers at Onitsha waterside, which was his headquarters. In all there were seven priests and five Brothers serving in the mission at the time. As funds were limited most of the hard labour would have to be done by themselves. Other works were to be cut back for the moment and the children who were able to work were called on to do so in aid of the mission station.

By 1902, the year of Shanahan's arrival, the statistics published in the *État du Personnel* show that there were four main mission stations operating and that there were 1,400 Catholics at Onitsha Waterside, 100 at Onitsha town, 300 at Agouleri and 30 at Nsugbe. Considering that most of these were children it was a very modest result for all the work done since 1885.

As to the Irish presence there was Br David Doran, who taught an elementary school. It was later said that he was the originator of primary education in Southern Nigeria. He provided other vital services to the community as he supervised the vegetable garden and maintained an active interest in his old metier in Rockwell, namely in charge of the kitchen. Fr F.X. Lichtenberger, who as we saw spent seven years at Blackrock, was in charge of schools and the catechists or trainee teachers. Fr Joseph Cronenberger, who had been in the senior scholasticate in Rockwell with

Shanahan, is listed as being in charge of schools, especially the higher grade classes from Br David's school. As the climate soon proved too taxing for him he was obliged to withdraw from the tropics. From then on he took up ministry in the USA.⁵ Br Othrain Casey, who was professed on 19 March 1902, had already left for Nigeria early in May.

One can well imagine that Fr Lejeune was looking forward with special interest to the arrival of the new Irish contingent expected at the end of 1902. The date of Fr Shanahan's arrival in Africa is given as 13 November. In later years when asked by a close friend to what he attributed, humanly speaking, the phenomenal success that attended his efforts he replied: "When I arrived in Africa I made a vow that I would respect everyone I had to deal with."⁶

Fr Pat McDermott, the leader of the Irish group, wrote to Paris on 11 December 1902 to announce their safe arrival. He reported that all had gone well on the voyage and that they had been able to say mass all along the route. They were very well received by Fr Lejeune, who seemed to be indefatigable and never sparing himself. Fr McDermott had already taken charge of the local school and was pleased to find that the children were rated highly by the inspector, who was especially impressed by the standard of their singing.⁷

Fr Lejeune himself reported the arrival of this welcome reinforcement of his team as follows:

The Irish priests arrived in good health. All are on retreat for eight days as in the novitiate. Each day there is a reunion to decide on the Igbo version of the prayers and Catechism. The SMA Fathers were here with the Prefect to finalise their Catechism in order to have a uniform text at least for the prayers. Fr McDermott (who had taught for a period in the Senior Scholasticate in France. Ed.) was amazed to hear so much discussion on philosophy and theology on his arrival! Fr McDermott is in charge of schools; Shanahan goes to Onitsha town where there are 100 children awaiting him and some ancient chiefs.⁸

Fr Shanahan's introduction to 'missionary' work proved to be a baptism of fire and he was to retain vivid memories of it all his life. Fr Lejeune might not know about Shanahan's rugby prowess but he recognised a physically fit man when he saw him and he had no hesitation in piling testing work on him. Years later, when in relative retirement in Clareville, Shanahan recalled his rude introduction to Africa. This is how his memories were transcribed in 1936 by Fr John Jordan in the *Missionary Annals* and though Fr Jordan persuaded Bishop Shanahan to have his name appended as the writer one must be aware that the style is unmistakably Jack Jordan's own:

It was in 1902 that as a young priest fresh from Theology, I first turned my face towards Nigeria, having volunteered for this apparently God-forsaken Mission in accordance with the spirit of the Holy Ghost Congregation, which directs its members "to have a preference for the most abandoned souls." Certainly the souls in Nigeria were abandoned enough for anything in those days. After the boat which brought me had nosed her way some 250 miles along the River Niger, I made my first contact with them at Onitsha. And what did I discover? The "Mission" consisted mainly of a few handfuls of slaves, bought by the Fathers (there were only a few of them alive) at 2/6 each from slave ships passing down the river. These unfortunate creatures were the most miserable specimens imaginable—cowardly, browbeaten, deceitful. As foundation-stones for the spiritual edifice of Christianity, they were just "*ne plus ultra*." But they were almost the only class that would listen to a word the

missionaries had to say. And it was nothing short of heroic on the part of the latter to have bought them, for they were themselves bordering on destitution. No churches, no schools, no residences, save of the mud-wall variety; sleeping in little "shanties" built of shells and mud into whose sides the rats burrowed without effort, and on whose corrugated iron roofs the lizards frisked and gambolled at night. Food was mainly rice and yam, with yams and rice for a change! In addition, the natives were definitely hostile to what they considered the intrusion of the white man, and acting under orders from their "ju-ju" men and wizards, made life much more precarious than it would normally have been.

In this Mission, then, I found myself in 1902, and it was my good fortune that some time previously the one man in Africa who was capable of achieving the impossible had been appointed to take charge of it. That man was Father Lejeune, one of the finest and bravest missionaries I have ever known. Having performed extraordinary things in Gabon, he had been specially sent to Nigeria to organize it. And he did so with thoroughness. Realising at once that rude dwellings and schools with red clay floors and tin shed roofs were sapping the strength and vitality of the missionaries, he conceived the project—hitherto undreamed of in that part of Africa—of building in brick. With Fr. Lejeune to think was to act. When I stepped off the boat at Onitsha, brick-making was the order of the day in the Mission compound.

I shall never forget my first meeting with him there on the banks of the lordly Niger. A massive, red-headed giant, with a flaming red beard covering half his chest, he was built on Herculean lines. By birth a Norman, the blood of the Vikings ran in his veins, and certainly one needed no imagination to picture him at the head of a band of savage Norsemen. He welcomed me to Africa in a voice that thundered in my ears like the roar of a mighty cataract.

"Ho, ho! just the man I want! Young and fresh and strong. Well, there's plenty to do here for a strong man, *mon ami*."

I soon found out how true that was, especially when Fr. Lejeune began to give the details of his brick-building scheme. He simply bellowed with laughter when I asked him where the bricks were to be got and the skilled labour that seemed necessary for such work. "You and I are the labour. And we make the bricks. Come on and I'll show you."

He did show me—all too well. If anyone wants to know how, let him visit a brick-making factory. It is hot work in Ireland. But Ireland is an ice-cream shop compared to Africa. We had plenty of red clay, of course. Nor was there much trouble constructing the huge galvanised ovens for burning the bricks when they were moulded by hand and dried. But stoking those immense fires under a roasting African sun and shovelling for hours and hours on end, while the perspiration fell in cupfuls, was an experience I shall always remember. Fr. Lejeune slaved like a Trojan—and expected me to keep pace with him. When we got dead beat he would just plunge into the Niger, emerging a minute later apparently quite refreshed. Mosquitoes could come down upon us in thousands (and they did, there beside the river), blisters arise on face and arms and legs, the skin peel, the finger-nails crack, but a Mission had to be opened up. That was what we had come to Africa for. That was Fr. Lejeune's way of looking at things, and he was not the man to argue with.

Three months' "slave-driving" and the job was done, the first brick building was erected in Nigeria, the Mission was given a touch of permanency, at least physically. Looking at it with a critical eye, Fr. Lejeune -who had thirteen years of experience in Gabon to back him—growled cryptically, "Not too bad, *mon enfant* That's the first step taken; *c'est le premier pas qui coute.*" " And the second step, Father?" " Will be taken by you right now. Yes, right now! There's a village called Ogboli two miles away. Go up and evangelise it! And listen. Don't waste time coming down here for dinner—I'll send it along to you. Your job is to evangelise. Nothing else. You can look after your teaching quarters yourself. *Au revoir*"

So the spacious house which Fr Shanahan had slaved at, and which Fr Lejeune was to write so proudly about in the *Bulletin*, was not to be enjoyed by him as of yet.

Ogboli

Onitsha 'town' as distinct from Onitsha Waterside or Wharf was really a group of small villages united by links of kinship and a network of paths through farmland. Ogboli, one of these villages, was to be the scene of Fr Shanahan's first pastoral activity in Africa. He was not a pioneer there: he was replacing Fr Joseph Cronenberger, who had done his senior studies with him at Rockwell but who had been sent immediately to Nigeria after his ordination. By the end of July 1902 he had already developed a serious health problem which forced him to withdraw from the tropics.

We continue with an extract from Fr Jordan's redaction of his interview with Bishop Shanahan in 1936:

I departed without a word. The village of Ogboli showed little interest in its "evangeliser" - just stared, accustomed to see white men periodically. Ibo was the language spoken here as everywhere else, and I was as yet totally ignorant of it. No use, therefore, asking for "lodgings." Anyway the village was largely a conglomeration of rude mud huts, with straw or matting for roofs. After poking around for a bit, I managed to get a few sheets of corrugated iron and half a dozen stakes. The rest of the "house" did not take much putting together. And it was easier work than making bricks.

But the evangelisation? Ah, there was the difficulty. The first step was to learn sufficient Ibo for carrying on a conversation. This I did by spending my day trying to get different villagers to talk to me. Before long it became apparent that the children were the safest teachers. Their initial shyness gone, they began to cluster around willingly, enjoying my attempts to speak to them. Later, they helped me to rig up the mud hovel we dignified by the name of "school" and when Fr. Lejeune had sent on some slates and pencils—with a few spare sheets to make "trousers" for my youngsters - we had our first day's class with fifteen little black lads between the ages of six and twelve. Afterwards the numbers gradually increased, and at the end of the year, there was quite a goodly number under instruction for Baptism.

It was just at this time that a vicious attack of spleen disease broke out in Ogboli, killing a great number, especially children. A scourge for the population in general, it yet proved itself the way to Heaven for many.

Day in and day out I was kept busy instructing and baptising those in immediate danger of death. Ah! What a joy it was to give the highest of all lives - the Divine Life - to those poor outcasts. And how puny and insignificant a thing their social status or their bodily suffering seemed when

one saw them on the verge of an eternity of bliss, living for ever in the company of the Most Blessed Trinity. Great joy to them and great joy, too, to the missionary - the spiritual father whose function it was to transmit the Divine Life to them. And how patiently they bore their sufferings when I explained to them how Jesus suffered for them. It was a lesson for me for the rest of my days, and it showed me what I thank God everlasting for having let me know - the innate goodness and attractiveness of the African soul.

That soul aspires to God - to All Goodness - by some inborn tendency, and the missionary has but to foster the tendency. The African, once you understand and love him in Christ, is a treasury of goodness and loveliness.

Only those who have lived with him, and spoken to him of God from the depths of their own souls, know that.

I had to attend to those poor people corporally as well as spiritually, nursing and feeding them, giving medicine and antidotes. As a result, when the epidemic had passed their hearts opened out to me and nothing they could do seemed enough. Speaking to them of God, our common Father, and seeing them respond to His voice in their souls, was joy and recompense a million fold for the hardships of the life.¹⁰

One must remember that when Bishop Shanahan spoke those words in 1936 he was speaking in the light of his long years of close contact with the people of Nigeria and not merely of the time he had spent in Ogboli.

Early in March 1903 Fr Lejeune made some drastic changes in his team. His letter on the matter to Mgr Le Roy gives us a taste of his forthright style:

Fr Bubendorf. With regard to this Father I have taken a radical decision. It is impossible for me to speak of him as Vicar General and First assistant. Every thing is only for him, and he does not listen to any direction, any advice, any entreaty about economy... I don't want him anymore as Vicar General nor as Assistant.

I propose to the Mother house, in his place Frs Shanahan and Demaison as First, Fr Vogler as Second. In case I should die, I am leaving my instructions to Fr Shanahan in a locked drawer. Fr McDermot would spend everything in the twinkling of an eye... Fr Shanahan enjoys perfect health, works well, is learning the language, has very sound judgement, and is cautious in his relations with the whites.¹¹

Being only two miles away from Onitsha Wharf or Waterside, Fr Shanahan walked back there from time to time especially for Feast Days and other reunions in the spacious house he had helped to build. Having called to Onitsha for a short stay in October 1903 Fr Shanahan came on the spiritual notebook he had begun in 1897 during his novitiate in France. He decided to add a note reflecting his thoughts now that he had been introduced to missionary life in Nigeria.

Onitsha 5 Oct. 1903

Read this last little note of the last happy days of my novitiate during a short stay in Onitsha town, 5 October, six years after the novitiate.

Thanks be to you, my God, for having preserved me up to this in your holy Apostolic Congregation

Thanks for having been so good as to send me to Africa

May your holy name be blessed and praised for all eternity

May your will be fulfilled in me as in all things

May my heart never wander from you

May I never neglect spending every atom of my energy, mental and physical, in saving those souls you love so much, because so unhappy

Ah! Deus meus et omnia, when the outlines of the everlasting hills appear on the horizon of Eternity, may it be my happy lot at last to see you and love you for all eternity. Then at last I cannot sin and I cannot stray away from you.

Then at this seeing you “*facie ad faciem*” won’t I join with the angels’ choirs singing with joyful heart: “*Gloria in excelsis Deo*” *Hosanna in excelsis, Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto, sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper et in saecula saeculorum. Amen*”

As they were a rather international community with no real preparation for dealing with the normal cultural clashes, it is not surprising that such a situation was bound to trigger off occasional confrontations. The Irish students who had done their studies in France over the years, and more so the Irish Brothers who were sent there to do their novitiate and learn some metier, had been from time to time been subjected to insensitive treatment when they failed to comply with the French norms of life. At times they were made to feel that they were second class citizens rather than children of the same family. This left some – not all by any means – with deep grudges and an ingrained resentment that could easily flare up culminating in unbalanced confrontations in daily life. As the Irish contingent was now more numerous, especially at reunions, some clashes developed. Writing about these to Mgr Le Roy Fr Lejeune made the following critical comments:

Fr Shanahan has a set on Alsatians and the Irish Brothers (Othrain in particular) are also up in arms. That made me laugh in the beginning but when it became serious I felt obliged to tell Shanahan that he was wrong on several points. The Alsatians are not less mischievous and accuse the Irish Fathers of conspiring to get me out of here. I am here and intend to remain but when I am gone it will be necessary to have a strong hand at the helm who will not be afraid to give a rap on the knuckles to both sides. Is it to be an Irishman or an Alsatian that is the question.¹²

All that was necessary for a violent flare-up was an insensitive remark that triggered off an over-reaction. This is what happened to Fr Shanahan himself. The incident happened most likely on 17 March 1904 – the Feast of St Patrick – a national occasion that means so much to all Irishmen – especially those living away from home. We let Fr Jordan tell the story as he had heard it from Shanahan years later when in retirement:

After having celebrated Mass he appeared in his best white soutane, head erect and chest out, with a large green and gold harp surmounted by a sprig of worn but sacred shamrock over his heart. The harp and shamrock had been sent by his mother from Glankeen (*recte* Gortnalara). Some other Fathers were gathered for a meeting and towards evening all came together for “chop”. During the course of the meal, one of the continental Fathers made a slighting remark about St. Patrick’s use of the Shamrock. In an instant the Irishman was on his feet, eyes blazing and hands trembling with anger. For a moment it seemed as though the whole table would be turned over. But he mastered himself, and whirling round, strode out with firm and set face. Fr. Lejeune followed him and tried to calm him down. But it was useless.

“Insult me - yes, by all means! Insult my country - perhaps! But insult St. Patrick - never. Never - *mon père* - never” And he disappeared in the direction of the bush after a parting statement that he would never return to the Mission house, and would take the next boat home.

That night he had a dream, in which he saw his mother and his father in Glankeen weeping in bitter sorrow because their child had turned his back on the little children of Africa who were crying out to him for the Faith. Great shame and grief filled his soul; what would he not give to be back in Nigeria once more? Just then a series of terrific noises woke him and he jumped up in his bed to find a wild pig rooting around his little rest house with joyous abandon.

"Never was a visitor so welcome," he said afterwards, "as this one that reminded me so vividly of Patrick, the swineherd of Slieve Mish. I got out on my knees and thanked him from my heart for having saved me from being a shameless deserter. And I solemnly promised him that within the limits of holy obedience nothing, absolutely nothing, would get between me and Africa. He returned, contrite and humble, to the Mission House next morning. Fr. Lejeune was awaiting him.

"I prayed for you, *mon enfant*, that your faith would not fail. After all, what would have happened to your country, if the glorious St. Patrick had gone out waving the white flag of surrender instead of explaining the beautiful shamrock?"¹³

When word of these disputes arrived at Paris Fr Paschal who had special responsibility for dealing with correspondence from the missions is quoted as having warned them with the Latin proverb, *Divide et impera* namely that disunity would be the cause of their failure. Lejeune announced that Fr Shanahan had admitted that he had gone over the top. When he made his vow to respect everyone he had to deal with he had been thinking only of the native Africans. Now he had to realise that this attitude was to cover all and he was seen to have learned that lesson.

From the first account penned by Fr Shanahan for publication in the *Bulletin Général* we get a lively picture of the progress being made at Ogboli. By summer 1904 the mission had three permanent buildings, a chapel-cum-school, a house constructed with bricks and sheet iron with two rooms and a veranda for the priest and a catechist's house. The school was the principal work. The average attendance was 100 but there were days when the number rose to nearly 200. Fr Shanahan was amazed to find them such quick learners and was delighted with the enthusiastic singing of the hymns – even though they had to confine themselves to the Latin ones. The children loved to wear the scapulars, medals, cross etc. The newly approved Igbo catechism was in use from February 1903. Several children were baptised during the year but no adults as yet. "Great efforts have been made to get the heads of families to come and be converted but with no results up till now. They are determined to live in this world as did their ancestors until they go to join them in the hereafter". "Those little Blacks are intelligent, full of life and good will. It is marvellous how they learn so quickly. They have an hour of catechism each day and they apply themselves well at learning. Sunday there is a big sermon for them and they never think it too long. And you should hear them singing the Ave Maris Stella. As to their attachment to the missioner there can be no doubt." He mentions that though the Protestant missionaries have been trying hard there for some sixty years with no sparing of money and texts etc. their schools continue to diminish. As for their own efforts, much pain and loss had been suffered over the years sowing in tears since Fr Lutz began there but now it seems as if they were set to reap the fruits.

From time to time Fr Lejeune came along to join them for ceremonies. He was well-loved by the children as he never came empty-handed. He was affectionately known

to them as Granddad. In one of his letters published in the *Bulletin* we get a vivid description of his visit as celebrant for the mass on 8 December 1903. Fr Shanahan preached in English with an interpreter but the local king, who had converted to the Catholic faith with great enthusiasm, intervened frequently to correct the interpreter. The king also preached his own homily to the students at the celebration after mass.

After this very Christian celebration the celebrants and the Sisters had to pass through a local gathering who were celebrating in a very pagan manner. Fr Lejeune, who loved a confrontation, describes what happened:

Resolutely I pushed my way through the crowd until I reached the masked men, who fled before me. Then I shouted 'Those who want to serve God and renounce the Devil, follow me'. I was followed by about seventy children and we made our way home, Fr Shanahan and myself, delighted with the way we had celebrated the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary and put the Devil to flight.

The Sisters, who were slightly nervous, went home by the short cut.¹⁴

As Fr Shanahan was back again in Onitsha at the end of June he was moved to pen his thoughts once more as he looked back on what he was, as revealed by his novitiate notes, and reflecting on his present state.

June 27 1904 Once again my eyes have caught sight of the foregoing pages. How happy to think of old and happy days! How painful to realise I'm so little changed for the better since the days of my novitiate – on I stumble, carrying so so my cross, always in the company of the same evil defects that long ago should have been banished from my heart. It is now fifteen years since I received the habit, since I was on retreat in Cellule. My God though I have not improved, yet as in those happy days I rush to say to you with great energy of heart and soul "*Deus meus et omnia.*" Forgive an old sinner. Don't remember his iniquities, grant him the grace to be something better, never to offend you mortally, the grace to do something for your honour and glory. The grace to die in your divine service, under the shadow of your sacred banner, the cross of my Lord and master. The favour of dying here in this foreign land – forgotten by all save you and my good mother Mary. O When will the day come when I cannot again offend you – the everlasting day in the Mansions of my Father. Welcome suffering, sorrows, humiliation – provided that one day I can see you face to face and sing with your angels and saints the endless hymn of joy "*Gloria in excelsis Deo.*"

Dekina

Feeling that at last he was relieved of supervising the various departments in the Onitsha area, Fr Lejeune decided that he could now set off on a long trek up north along the Niger river to inspect areas farther afield where he had reason to believe that there were more promising prospects for evangelising the reported teeming millions of Nigerians. It was a challenging and indeed a dangerous trek at the time as, apart from internal strife between warring tribes, there was high tension between the British military outposts and the native population because of attacks on these outposts and severe reprisals by the military. Fr Lejeune eventually reached the region where the Benue river joins the Niger. Mgr Le Roy had urged him to send photographs and relevant maps of their works. He now wrote a detailed account of his exploration of the territory for the Superior General Mgr Le Roy, who as a former missionary explorer was specially interested in learning about new regions of Africa. Part of Fr Lejeune's account was published in the *Bulletin Général* and a more extended version was carried by the main missionary publication of the time in France - *Missions*

Catholiques. Though Fr Lejeune had made a good case for opening a new station in that area he opted for a locality less removed from base. This was Dekina where there was a British fort and which was some 160 miles from Onitsha.

Writing to the Resident of Bassa Province, Dekina, on 14 October 1904 Fr Lejeune states the purpose of the mission and the reason for starting at Dekina:

Sir, His Excellency the acting High Commissioner has had the kindness to suggest Dekina in Bassa Province as being a suitable place to found a mission with schools and a village for liberated slaves. Having come here with Fr Joseph Lichtenberger, I find it really far more suitable for our purposes than Ibi, food being cheaper, the population entirely pagan and expenses small in comparison to those that would be necessary to found a mission at Ibi. Therefore I intend, with your permission and that of his Excellency, to establish a mission at Dekina with

- 1) a day school for the children of Dekina itself, principally pagan children
- 2) boarding school for children of distant towns with forty or fifty pupils
- 3) Industrial schools for carpenters, gardeners, farmers etc.
- 4) a village of freed slaves.
- 5) I have already received assurance from Sir F. Lugard, High Comm., that the Government itself will liberate the slaves and give them to our care, and we promise to observe punctually all the regulations made by His Excellency and his representatives at Dekina... It is our hope and intention that the mission will support itself after a few years by its own industry..."¹⁵

As visualised by Fr Lejeune the Dekina project seemed all set for success. It was in fact to prove a very tough assignment. The man chosen to take charge of the new station was a veteran missionary, Fr Joseph Lichtenberger, brother of Fr F.X. He, like Fr Lejeune, had previously worked in Gabon.¹⁶ He was given very detailed instructions by Fr Lejeune before he set out from Onitsha on 13 October 1903. As assistant he was given the newly-arrived Fr Paul Herry. Aged twenty-six, this was his first appointment. A native of Brittany he had done his secondary studies at Blackrock where he had made a special effort to perfect his English in order to be able to serve more effectively in one of the missions where English was the official language. His immediate problem now was to learn one of the local languages.¹⁷

Conditions were primitive at Dekina: food was scarce and the work of clearing the bush for building the mission compound and arable area was very hard. Pastoral contact with the local people proved difficult because of a strong Muslim influence all around. It was not at all the romantic pastoral work he had envisaged all along.

Unfortunately the mission got caught up in the ongoing clashes between warring tribesmen and between the local population and the British military. The military commander, Col. O'Riordan, Irish and Catholic, and Lieutenant Burney were ambushed and murdered. This was followed by a severe reprisal. A local native headquarters of the Okpoto country was wiped out. Then on Sunday 31 January 1904 a bushfire started that wiped out the mission station. The missionaries were left with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. An entrance in the journal reflects the feeling of depression among the missionaries: "This gives us the opportunity to abandon the place, either permanently or at least for a considerable time. The mission holds out little hope of success, especially since the Okotos have revolted". Having lost everything in the fire – even their shoes – it was decided that they would have to

return to Onitsha for the moment. It proved a painful experience walking barefooted for five days.¹⁸

Shocked but not disheartened Fr Lejeune decided that the mission was to be restarted once Fr Joseph and Paul had sufficiently recovered from their ordeal. They resumed their work starting off from the foundations again. Then the mission received another serious blow when Fr Joseph developed a large abscess in his arm that called for his withdrawal from Nigeria. There was no question of leaving Fr Herry on his own, especially as his health was none too robust. Writing to headquarters about the critical situation Fr Lejeune said: "Fr Joseph Lichtenberger has an abscess on his arm made worse by attending to his horse. I must send Shanahan to replace him. Anyway he has asked for some time to go there and not without being motivated by his own feelings."¹⁹

Years later, when the new policy of concentrating on evangelisation through schools was being pursued with notable success and when the Government called for the setting up of a Training College for teachers, there were those in the General Administration in Paris who opposed this approach to mission work as being out of line with practice hitherto in missions conducted by the Congregation. Shanahan decided to pen a spirited defence of their new policy. As he ranged over the lack of progress in the early years of their mission in Nigeria he spoke of his own experience during the two years he laboured at Ogboli as follows

Eight years ago I was placed at a small station at Ogboli. In that place there was a sort of school there with 25 young children. In the course of a year I baptised about 150 children *in articulo mortis* but never even one adult. Nevertheless I did pastoral work so-called. I did nothing but go from house to house speaking about our religion. All for nothing. Today there are almost 1,000 Christians at Ogboli. Not one outside of school came to be instructed.²⁰

But to learn how Shanahan received his appointment for Dekina from Fr Lejeune let us return to that interview given by the retired Bishop Shanahan in 1936 to be published in the *Missionary Annals*:

Nearly two years were passed at Ogboli before Fr Lejeune decided to send me up North in the summer of 1904. He appeared unexpectedly at my hut one day.

"You've got to get out of here," he said, "and strike out for Dekina. Follow the river for the first 160 miles. Then there's a well-defined bush path which will bring you to Dekina. It's only 40 miles from your landing place! Poor Fr. Josef is up there by himself and he's nearly done in You must help him."

An hour later saw me and my trousseau (a Mass outfit, a 2/6 hammock for bedtime, and some linen oddments) moving up the Niger in a canoe manned by native paddlers After weeks of rough going I reached my goal, weary, footsore and hungry.

Ogboli had looked a pretty barbarous place when I first visited it. But it was heaven compared with Dekina. The poor old Father who was trying to keep the flag of Christ flying there looked a physical wreck; the "house" we had to inhabit was a "lean-to" structure of the most primitive type. When the double-barrelled gun failed to bring down a guinea-hen or partridge, one had not to bother about dinner. If good luck brought us a brace of birds there was a nail on an old cotton tree where we hung the spare one.... The people would not even let us into their houses, so that we were obliged to buy fifteen slaves through the Government to have a little Christian community. Slaves were cheap in that part of the world, where food was so scarce - I often saw them sold in the open market for a bowl of corn. Some of those we got proved

themselves splendid Christians, true as steel, and for years afterwards they followed me wherever I went. Did not Peter and Paul and Tom help to build the splendid Cathedral at Onitsha, finished only in 1935 ?

To the eternal credit of Frs. Josef and Herry be it said that despite the rigours and ever-accumulating disappointments of a spiritually barren Mission station, like Dekina, neither of them ever dreamed of showing the white feather by quitting. No! The Moslems might make things as unpleasant as they liked, but where these gallant fellows had once established the Cross of Christ, there they would stand immovable. What men of iron these early pioneers were!

And what men of God!²¹

Fr Shanahan arrived at Dekina on 26 July 1904. Fr Herry had written some months earlier to Paris describing how limited were their contacts with the local people as they feared to venture far from their mission station in the aftermath of the military reprisal lest they be identified with the British government officials. There was also the danger that they might get caught up in inter-tribal feuds. Fr Shanahan decided that they must take the risk of trying to discover the areas where the people lived and see what kind of reception they would get once the people recognised them for what they were. This is how he described his first such missionary expedition to Fr Lejeune. The letter is worth citing in full:

Thank you for your letter written on 10th August. It only arrived here on the 14th August. Everyone in Dekina is pleased that the painful situation which existed in Onitsha has ceased. Your visit to the Upper Niger will be eagerly expected. We will, before that, know a little better what are the tribes which surround us. Last Thursday, we had our first excursion into the country of the Okpotos. We left around seven o'clock, and waited until midday to the South-West of Dekina. During the first two hours, we saw no villages, no cultivated fields, only bush, mountains, valleys, and here and there, a patch of virgin forest. At last, round about ten o'clock, we met the inevitable kid-goat. All we had to do was to follow it, and we reached a dozen huts. There was only one woman in the village. Our arrival did not seem to please her much. Most unwillingly, she indicated a track which would take us to a much bigger village. It was true. There we found Okpotos of all sizes. They gave us a very good welcome as soon as they knew we were not 'gun-people'. We saw four or five children. The poor old white haired woman, and the old men came to greet us. We exchanged handshakes, and we sat down. The chief sent one of his men to accompany us and show us the five or six other villages which, all together, bear the name 'Ogege'. Everywhere, we received the same welcome. From Ogege, we went on to Elika, leaving Ofadji at our left. We can see, on all sides, splendid plantations. At midday, covered with sweat; we reached the highest summit of a high and long mountain range. What a splendid sight! Faraway towards the North, on could see Lokoja, the Niger and the Benue. Closer to us, the immense plain, the home of the Bassa Comos. To the West, the high peaks at the foot of which are "Gende and itole" Dekina, seen from where we stood, seemed to be in a hollow. To the South, the land seemed to be more uneven. There were cultivated fields everywhere, but we did not see any villages.

Fortunately, we found some good people in a field of yams. We were dying of hunger and thirst. They quickly lit a fire and prepared yams. Meanwhile they

offered us a drink of Pito from their calabash. Oh! The good people they are!

It was there, sitting round the fire, waiting for the meal to be ready, that we had our first lesson of Okpoto. They made us repeat the same word twenty times until it was pronounced correctly. Once the meal was over, we had to say goodbye, but

they asked us to come back. We will certainly do so.

This then was our first excursion. This week we will go into another direction to continue our exploration. In the direction of Ogoge there is no water. During the whole day we found only two thin trickles. We are still waiting for the rain. For five weeks , we still have not any...Fr Herry is full of life, his health is good. So is Bro Adelard. Greetings to all the confreres of Old Calabar.²²

Shanahan's next letter to Lejeune, 12 September 1904, again reported progress. This letter is again worth quoting in full as it gives some indications of local social conditions as well as giving us an insight to some of their own little daily concerns:

We have continued our excursions: one to 'Abusu' and another to 'Ossori', at about 15 kilometres from Dekina, in Okpotos Country.

Shanahan's next letter to Lejeune, 12 September 1904, again reported progress. This letter is again worth quoting in full as it gives some indications of local social conditions as well as giving us an insight to some of their own little daily concerns:

We have continued our excursions: one to 'Abusu' and another to 'Ossori' at about 15 kilometres from Dekina. The chiefs came to visit us in Dekina, so that you can see that the ferocious Okpotos are not all that terrible.

Everywhere Muslims are to be found; they are the people with authority. The number of those people is certainly not very big. Each Okpoto man, woman and child, wear a quantity of amulets. It is difficult to know what their religion is. So far, we have not seen any idol. We have only discovered, under a handful of grass at the end of a stick, a few cowries. Everyone is well dressed. The women well behaved. Now one sees small corn everywhere. Once the harvest is over, people build in the fields very tiny houses in which the grain is stored.

At Abusu, the aim of our latest incursion, we had the first Okpoto baptism; it was a small girl who was dying. She was given the name of Mary. We explained to these good people that we took a special care of children, and that we would always give them the best medicine if they fell ill.

Once again, I was due to leave for Aquacha, and Lafia, but on the very day of departure the 'Resident Captain' was taken ill. It will be for later.

People say that Sir Lugard is at Lokoya, and will perhaps come to Dekina.

The contract for the land has been sent to the Resident. He is right now making the plans etc...Who should sign? In the meantime I will sign it 'loco' Rev Fr Lejeune CSSp, Prefect Apostolic of Nigeria.

Fr Herry and the Brother are in good health. Our wine is finished. I have told Fr Vogler to order some. In the meantime, we will do some penance. You know someone who needs it badly.

My last pair of shoes is nearly worn out. I could not find any in Lokoya, or in Onitsha. It would be a great charity on your part if you could send me a pair, size 11. Otherwise, goodbye to apostolic excursions.

Greetings to all the confreres of Old Calabar. Believe, Reverend and dear Father, that I am yours in Our Lord.

PS When will you come to visit us? We will go and meet you.²³

Fortunately Fr Shanahan felt obliged to report regularly to Fr Lejeune about their progress and problems. We quote a few extracts from his next letter omitting the details about landscape and layout of the country with a view to planning the future stations:

On my return from a long excursion in Okpoto land it was for me great joy to find your good letter filled with encouragements for the Dekinans. The small postcard was also welcome. Many thanks for the 350 francs. Yes, we will hold Dekina, and meanwhile, will continue to be aware of what is going on around us. Old Calabar is doing extremely well. Fr Lena continues to fill heaven with the poor and abandoned of this world. The collection is very successful, so much the better. You will have lots of news to give us when you come. Fr Mac 'in labour' has given birth to a mouse, as far as I can see.

At last the trip to Lafia has taken place. In a few words, I will tell you what I have seen and heard along the way. The distance between Dekina and Lafia is 35/40 miles. Two hours from here, all cultivation ceases, leaving only bush everywhere. A very small path winds its way through the forest. One cannot see anything beyond two or three metres on either side. If one wanted to fight a real war, a few men would suffice to prevent anyone from passing through. 'Stone guns' are at home here. There are very few villages; the country is dead. One does not hear anything, not even a cock; it seems that all cocks have disappeared. No goats either, because it would be so easy to follow them, and thus reach the village. Since last year, nothing has been planted. And therefore, people will only give yams out of fear. It is said that the Okpotos are all slave traders. Farms are very far away from villages, well hidden in the bush. There, huts are built where, after a hard day's work, the slave rests bound to a post. He never leaves the farm except to be sold.

In each village along the way, there are men watching at some distance from where people live. As soon as a stranger is sighted, a small, long and flat bell gives the signal. The sound of that small bell is heard very far away, and depending on the way one beats the bell, the people in the village run away, or take their arrows and guns and lie in ambush along the way; or again, stay where they are. White people never enter villages or compounds. I am, I think, the first to go round everywhere, as formerly in Onitsha.

When the understood the sort of person the bearded White Man was; that he came to attend to their sick, teach their children, without asking for taxes at the point of the bayonet etc, etc, you have seen how their faces change. Immediately, from all sides, the young and old men and women come out of the bush. After one hour we are getting on marvelously, the best friends in the world. I put stress on the absolute difference which exists between us and the government personnel. Immediately people began to talk, yams, eggs, and the hens which did not exist a moment ago came out of their hiding place; people insist that I should take whatever I want.

There are many children and they look intelligent. Several even wanted to accompany me but the name Dekina and the Bassas were enough to make them take to their heels. There is no word strong enough to express their contempt for the Bassas. This is due, I believe, to the fact that for the past hundred, or a hundred and fifty years, the Bassas have come to take slaves

from the Okpotos. The animosity of the Bassas against the Okpotos is no less sincere.

Just now I don't think there is much that can be done about this, apart from making ourselves seen, as you say. News travels so fast. Soon people will know us all over. A good number of chiefs have come to visit us. It is near Lafia, in a village called Amefa, that O'Riordan and Biemey have met the first resistance to their police. It is about 25 miles from Lafia to Akwatcha, a long day's journey. Akwatcha is in a hole surrounded by mountains, or rather hills, like our mission in Dekina. Before reaching Akwatcha, one finds beautiful villages built on a plateau. There is no 'tsetse' flies here. A nice river, the same that is at Lafia, passes close to the villages. This river, flows into Anambra creek. There is talking even of cleaning it up. The water is excellent and deep enough, they say, at all seasons for canoes. From Lafia to Akwatcha, I did not see a single farm. And yet the land is quite open and has been cleared of bush. From Akwatcha to Anikpa there is only one day's walk. Recently there was a general meeting in the extreme east of Okpoto country of these tribes; Okpotis, Munchis, Idomas and Ibos. The question that was discussed was war. They decided unanimously to wage war against the Whites, or at least send messengers to the Whites inviting them to come and fight. One chief even sent a cow to Mr Stevens, telling him to eat it in the hope that it might give him the courage to come and fight. If there is an expedition it will not be a Sunday stroll.

This letter is already too long, when you come we will talk about all this. As soon as the weather improves we hope to go to Edjule, halfway between here and Idah. It seems that there are very big villages all along the road. Perhaps we should be thinking of a mission station on the river somewhere near Idah, if we want to try to evangelise the Okpotos?

As regards the 'Hausas' or 'Muslems', there is no doubt that they are absolutely detested by the Okpotos. The day there is war, the first heads to fall will be those of the Hausas. They are very proud of themselves just now. They are grouped around the government houses. They are the Jews of this area. There is no wickedness that they are not accused of by the Okpotos. They are crooks and spies.

It is enough for twenty of them to come to a village for everyone to run away. There is no town at Lafia, and there is none in Akwatcha. There are Hausas but hardly any natives in these villages, the most miserable I have seen anywhere. It is the same thing here in Dekina. The Okpoto don't want juju. So I think that, in the light of what I have seen, the Okpotos are pagans, and, therefore, they are a marvelous field in which to sow the seed which will bear fruit for heaven.

As in the past we cannot have anybody at Dekina. The old chief of the Bassas beats his children who dare to come to us. I have an Okpoto interpreter; he also speaks the language of the Hausa. He goes with us on our excursions. Tomorrow Fr Herry and the Brother are going in the direction of Elika. We have again baptised a dying child. I came across him by chance, far from here, at Odu. We often find sick children, but we have no medicine at all. I don't know whether Fr Joseph has sent an order. Could not Onitsha order, keep and distribute to the various mission stations more medicine? I have asked them for more Ipeca etc... but they say there is none left.

We are always in good health. The Whites are very well disposed to us. It is more expensive to have such assiduous friends. But, for the time being, we cannot do without them. And perhaps it would be good to let things be as they are now until we are more independent.

Goodbye, and we hope to see you soon in Dekina. All our best wishes for the good work that is being done in Old Calabar. It must compensate in some way for the sadness which you feel when you see the other 'twin' who is sickly.²⁴

Sometime in October Shanahan received a letter from Lejeune that contained some critical personal remarks about his conduct of the schools in Onitsha (Oboli). As that letter has not survived we have to depend on Shanahan's reply to put us in the picture about their personal relations. Lejeune was undoubtedly a great missionary at heart, a wonderful organiser who got things done, but in the process he seems to have ridden roughshod over peoples' feelings and opinions. He had got into trouble because of this in Gabon and had eventually left the mission under a cloud. He was not long in Nigeria when he got peoples' backs up again. The catechists in particular went on strike against his methods. What the criticism Lejeune levelled at Shanahan while working in Onitsha is not recorded but Shanahan's reply, which was preserved by Lejeune, gives us a rare insight into Shanahan's personal relationship with Fr Lejeune for whom he was to retain the highest regard all his life:

I received your last letter from 'Old Calabar'. I accept everything you say to me and I accept it in very good grace. There is no need to go into certain explanations here re 'my management of Onitsha Schools', it is something we can talk about when you come next time. I sent you a letter to Old Calabar, giving some details concerning a trip to Lafia and Kwatcha. The governor leaves Lafia, and Mr Stevens whom you know came back from there today. The Attorney General, Judge Platt, has spent a few days in Dekina. He has asked on behalf of the A C, Sir Lugard, a number of explanations on what we intend to do in the Bassa province. I told him that our Prefect Apostolic would come in a few weeks' time, and that he would be able to give him all the information he wanted.

The judge asked me then to write to you and to ask you to go and see him when you pass through Lokoja.

We have not received anything, including our provisions, (we have received neither our wine nor our food supply). I have written to Fr Vogler asking for such articles such as coffee, the camp bed for Fr Joseph etc. If you could bring them as far as Lokoja we could meet you there if we knew what day you are coming.

We have kept a few little things for the occasion. Fr Herry is keeping some potatoes in reserve. Brother Adelard a chicken and a big duck, then there are some cabbages and carrots, some tomatoes, and a nice place to take a good bath, but there are also millions of mosquitoes, so bring your net.

Perhaps you would not believe how it made my heart bleed to see in your last letter how much you had been hurt. I admire the frankness with which you revealed your thoughts to me, I love above all, to see the heart of a father behind these rather strong words! The heart of an old missionary who despite storms and tempests remains victorious over himself and the world.

It is perhaps the first and last time I will write this to you, but I will always have fond memories of you. It was under your guidance that I was initiated into the missionary life. The novitiate was somewhat hard (a bit tough), but it

does not matter. Now that I know you better, and know myself better, the difficulties of the past are buried in the past. As far as I am concerned I have profited from them.

We are all in good health. Come as soon as possible.²⁵

There is little in these contemporary letters to give us any glimpse of daily life in the little community at Dekina. Speaking a few years later after the premature death of Fr Harry Fr Shanahan gave a general snapshot of the life lived by Fr Harry, Brother Adelard and himself in this remote mission station.

At Dekina one lived in conditions of extreme poverty. We had to do our own laundry, our own cooking, try to keep the place clean, find the necessary water... At seven in the morning each of us armed with tools (a cutlass) set off to work till breakfast time clearing the brushwood. The man on duty for the week went back home at 11 am to prepare the meal, a repast suitable for anchorites and washed down in the form of wine with a beverage made from fermented maize. The scorching hours from 1 to 3 were set aside for the study of the native languages, Hausa and Okpoto. Twice a week we went on apostolic outings to make contact with the people.

In the midst of these occupations Fr Harry never lost his natural sense of gaiety which always charmed his confreres. He loved at eventide under the clear light of the moon to sing Fr Botrel's compositions intermingled with Breton songs which always produced a profound effect on his Celtic soul.²⁶

In spite of the sweat and work put into preparing the mission compound, the visits to the people in the surrounding countryside there was little to show from a missionary point of view. One baptism - that of a little girl - who was given the name Mary. The people had seen that they cared for little children but they were in no hurry to take up the offer of a school. Above all the missionaries were disappointed that the promise made by Sir Frederick Lugard of sending redeemed slave children to the mission had not been kept. These would have supplied the nucleus of a mission of the type that had been operated elsewhere, namely the beginning of forming a Christian village where the children would in time be trained in the cultivation of the soil that had been cleared. They had no inkling that there was a definite official policy in this matter of not confiding the redeemed slave children to the Christian mission school. From later studies of British policy in the area it has been suggested that Lugard had definite guidelines in this matter. He felt it would complicate matters in their relations with Muslims who were very definitely being courted as being more in line with the government's strategy in dealing with the native Africans, the frequent changing of missionary personnel in schools was seen not to be in the best interests of the children. As to the doctrine taught to the children in the mission schools about the equality of all races in the plan of redemption it was felt that while acceptable as a matter of doctrine it could have undesirable effects when translated into political judgements. Finally, a problem for the mission itself was the lack of available funds to carry out its own project of redeeming slave children. Efforts by the Motherhouse to raise funds in England for the redemption of slave children met with no success.²⁷

From the reports sent to Paris by Lejeune based on the letters received from Shanahan the conviction began to harden at headquarters early in 1905 that the mission in Dekina was not viable. An extract from Lejeune's letter dated 6 January 1905 illustrates this attitude:

The main trouble is that the Government of Northern Nigeria is installing Moslem chiefs everywhere, in the most pagan villages. Fr. Shanahan says that the pagans are deserting their villages so as to avoid the taxes that these

When Bishop Shanahan, then in retirement, addressed a packed hall at Blackrock College he held his audience spellbound as he recalled that last visit from Fr Lejeune putting it in the context of the sacrifice he had made for the sake of his two confreres serving in that remote mission station which he knew would demand heroic sacrifices to keep it going in face of so many odds:

His health had broken down – broken in the service of Christ, and he came up to see us. There were no roads, of course, no ways of travelling, and his poor feet were broken up and covered with calluses, and he had to walk those forty miles he told us about, but he wanted to come and bid us a last good-bye. He told us to hold on and not to give in.³⁰

Fr Lejeune had arrived back in France on 15 April 1905 in the hopes that surgery might prolong his life. In the meantime Fr Shanahan now had to report directly to the Motherhouse himself about conditions at Dekina. He addressed his letter to Fr J-B Pascal, the Second Assistant, who had special responsibility for dealing with correspondence from the missions. He wrote as follows:

Father Lena has sent me the sheet which you will find together with this letter, plus the requested information. You may be interested to know what we are doing in Dekina. So far, we have not been able to get from the government more than fourteen slaves, seven of whom are between two and seven years. The other seven can work a little. We work with them to plant some yams, cassava, local beans etc. Food is expensive, and all the more so as one must pay cash, and for three pence, the smallest coin in the Protectorate, one gets very little.

The people of the area do not want to send their children to us to teach them. When we go and visit them, they let us know that they would be infinitely happier if we left them in peace. As you know, the Hausas are, by themselves, the majority in Dekina. In the whole of N Nigeria, it is through them, or through Muslims like them, that the orders given by the Government are carried out. Consequently, they are considered as the true masters of the country after the Whites. Those people are, at the same time, missionaries. Wherever they are, they seek to proselytise.

They know that we are the ‘malams’ or priests of the Whites. They know very well that we preach the religion of Christ, opposed to that of the prophet. Therefore, insofar as it depends on them, our influence will be of little account.

That is why, apart from our work with the slaves, our mission in Dekina, insofar as I can see, will never come to anything. I would love to be able to say the contrary. But if our work for the slaves succeeds, Dekina, because of its position, could at least become a central school for the formation of catechists, and apprentices for the different surrounding tribes.

Another thing: we only take boys. But there are many more girls than boys who are liberated. We are constantly asked whether we want to take girls; but we cannot. For our work to be complete, it is necessary to establish immediately a ‘slave-home’ for girls. All that demands much money. To transport 25 kilos from the river to here, one must 1 fr.20.

People carry things only if they are forced. It is the Hausas who, by order of the government, give us porters. So that looking at the circumstances as a

whole, the future of our mission station does not appear bright. But is that not the way every mission begins? With come courage and the blessing of the Good Lord, our mission will grow and will become prosperous.³¹

A few days later Fr Shanahan happened on the spiritual note book which he had written during his novitiate year in Chevilly, 1897, and decided to enter a note about his present state of mind. The note reads:

18th May 1905 By chance this little notebook has come into my hands for the third time during this my third year in Africa. Now I am in Dekina, N.Nigeria. God grant me courage, patience, unlimited confidence in Divine Providence, the true spirit of prayer and charity to be able to do my work, to never forget asking from Heaven the necessary help to perform my duties.

Grant me also, my God, a spirit of true acceptance of my sins, may I never forget I have offended and have consequently to do penance. There's no day so long that has not a night. Death and eternity are the night which any day may come to shut out forever the sun of life.

Mary, my good Mother, grant that I may ever be ready to appear with clean heart and soul before the judgement seat of the Unerring Judge. Plead my cause for me, good Mother. If I have penance to do beyond, well, God's Holy Will be done.

That will also finish some day and then Heaven forever.

To God alone be honour, praise and glory from every creature the whole world over to the end of time.

Shanahan's letter written 13 May 1905 to Fr Paschal had not reached Paris by the time a letter arrived from Fr Lejeune announcing that, with the approval of the Motherhouse, he had decided to close the mission at Dekina. Though not totally unexpected the news came as a shock to the three men on the spot.

Having also received a letter from Mgr Le Roy announcing that Fr Lejeune's illness was terminal, Fr Shanahan wrote two letters to Paris - one to Mgr Le Roy and one to Fr Lejeune:

To Mgr Le Roy he wrote:

My Lord and Reverend Father

Thank you for the few lines you added to Fr Lejeune's letter. I could not express how painful for me has been the sad news of his illness. He will not be forgotten in the prayers of his confreres at Dekina. I know that our mission here was close to his heart. In his present state of health it is hard for him to know that it is to be abandoned.

Next Saturday, 26th August, we will leave for Onitsha. Our sixteen children, as ordered by Fr Vogler, will be entrusted to the government in Lokoja. There is a declaration which forbids the taking of any liberated child outside the protectorate of N Nigeria. We would have liked to keep these poor little children. They know their prayers very well, thanks to Fr Herry, and they sing several hymns very well. Nearly all of them can serve Mass.

They do not know that in three days we are going to be separated forever.

I assure you, My Lord, that we have really tried to make this mission station work but our efforts have not succeeded. Wherever we go, my confreres and myself, we will try to do our duty, to work for the sanctification of the Black people, in sanctifying and sacrificing ourselves.

May the Good God bless you and keep you a long time at the helm to direct

your apostolic workers.

Please, believe that I am the very devoted child of Your Lordship.

J Shanahan.

It was not the normal procedure that the Superior General should have written directly to anyone except the head of the mission and one can imagine that Fr Shanahan took special care in composing his first letter to Mgr Le Roy, but he must have taken very special care in wording a personal message to Fr Lejeune in order to help cheer up his spirits in spite of the loss of his cherished mission at Dekina, while trying also to cope with his own serious illness.

I have received your last letter, dated July, concerning the fate of Dekina. Just now we have only sixteen children, and as always, none from outside the school. So that I believe that in leaving Dekina, the loss, from the apostolic point of view, is not great. Our sixteen children will be entrusted to the Government in Lokoja. To the question put to Fr Vogler concerning their fate, he writes that it is better to give them back. It is true that some of them did not want to follow us to Onitsha. On the other hand you know that they could not follow us unless they had the authorisation of the N Comm. Having been given this authorisation, one would have had to write reports every six months, and our mission would have been opened to the inspection of the people of the government of N Nigeria, as long as these children were with us.

I was sorry to hear that your suffering has not got any less. May the Good Lord give you the grace to bear with courage, as you always do, this new cross which He has sent to you. Every day, I pray for you during the offering of the Holy Sacrifice. I also try to say my Office a little better for the same reason.

You remember when we went hunting together for guinea-fowl? I went again the other day, alone and without a gun, to remember the days gone by. Saturday, we will leave for Onitsha. No matter where I am sent, I will do my best, drawing profit from my three years in Africa, to do my duty.

Fr Herry and Bro Adelard have asked me to send their best wishes to you. I will soon write to you from Onitsha.³²

On receiving the definitive word from France that the Dekina mission had been terminated, Fr Herry, who wrote up the community journal and wishing to emphasise that it was really a red-letter day, wrote in red ink for 20 May 1905:

A letter from Rev Fr Lejeune lets us know that Dekina has been suppressed by the Mother House. This news has caused us pain. It was bound to come sooner or later but we did not expect it yet. And our students. They have eaten their white bread up till now. What has the future in store for them?

As the final words in the community journal at Dekina, Fr Shanahan wrote: '*Dekina vixit!*' – 'Dekina has done with life'. He knew from his classical studies the significance of that particular form of the verb *vivere* to live: it had once been used famously to announce the execution of a batch of prisoners as, "They have done with life".

Speaking two years later on hearing the news of the premature death of Fr Herry, Fr Shanahan wrote this postscript about the closing of Dekina:

There is nothing which can equal the sorrow of a missionary, when he sees himself obliged to quit a station where he has worked so hard, suffered so much. One would say that each drop of sweat, which fell on the soil, each tear, each prayer, have sent down so many roots that bind the apostle to his post. One understands then how his heart bleeds when he must quit the place. He suffered more than others, this young missionary with such a sensitive heart,

who felt already that his energy had been drained by this his first field of labour in the apostolate.

I will never forget that painful instant , when stopping at the top of the Roko hill, Fr Herry turned back to take his last look at Dekina, and say a last adieu. During the long hours of the walk which followed no one uttered a word, so heavy was the heart of each one of us.³³

A letter to Paris dated 27 August 1905 by Fr Vogler, who was acting as administrator at Onitsha in Lejeune's place, informs us of the arrangements made for the members of the Dekina mission and their students: "Fr Shanahan has arrived with 15 students from Dekina. ..Shanahan is being posted to Nsugbe for the moment. I keep Fr Herry and Br Adelard here."

Nsugbe, situated ca 1000 metres from Onitsha, was opened as a mission station as early as 1892. It had a chequered career due mainly to the fact that it had not a permanent pastor in residence there. From 1897 until June 1901 it had been served by a priest coming occasionally from Onitsha. It is said that the people of Nsugbe sent over twenty delegations to Onitsha requesting the Prefect to send them a resident priest once again. At the time there was not even a Prefect Apostolic in residence in Onitsha. With the arrival of Fr Lejeune a new era was ushered in but due to lack of personnel he could not attend to Nsugbe till June the following year when he Fr Ganot – the former pastor there who had been away ill – returned to his post. On the 15 August Fr Lejeune came on a pastoral visit and baptised the local king as well as 40 others. The people were overjoyed at this new beginning and promised: 1. To send all their children to school. 2. To make all the people attend Mass and catechetical instruction. 3. To build two main roads to link up the Mission with the town. Huts were repaired to provide a school for the very young children in addition to the primary school held in the mission church-cum-school house. With the increase in school attendance and the support from the parents Fr Ganot felt he could refer to Nsugbe as "the flower of Paradise". However matters declined again on the enforced departure through illness of Fr Ganot. "There was then a weakening in faith, a falling off in religious observance; among the catechumens a marked uncertainty and hesitance and, finally, among the pagans there was indifference and even a withdrawal." Worse was to happen. The pastor had warned the people to cut the long grass around the mission compound as a break against recurring forest fires. Unfortunately his instructions were not implemented and the inevitable outbreak of fire happened severely damaging the mission complex.³⁴ The mission took up again with the arrival of a new priest Fr Brey. The figures given in the *État* for June 1904 are as follows: Nsugbe (Our Lady of Chartres) 1 priest – Fr Brey; 2 catechists, 6 boarders and 60 day students. It seems that the mission took a downturn again and was badly in need of an active pastor in residence by the time Fr Shanahan arrived back from Dekina in late August 1905. Fr Vogler, who was standing in for Fr Lejeune, appointed Fr Shanahan to Nsugbe 'for the moment.'

It would appear that people neglected to inform Fr Shanahan that the lands offered to the mission in Nsugbe were mostly what was known as "bad bush" or "evil forests" – that is land which for one reason or another had a sacred significance in pagan ritual or events. It was hoped by the Christians that this type of land would be exorcised by the fact that it was being used for mission purposes. Fr Shanahan, having heard senior members of the pagan community expressing their determination to join their ancestors in the next world even if that meant not going to heaven, came to the conclusion that he must endeavour to influence them to want to be with their grandchildren who would have learned to love their Christian religion and want to go

to the home promised by Jesus Christ. He saw that evangelisation of the parents and grandparents though the children was the great hope for the future. This made him more convinced that the schools held the key to conversions. So he got down to work immediately and with the help of the children began to clear further ground for the school and mission compound as he had done previously with Fr Gerry in Dekina. Unfortunately he found himself embroiled in a local uproar organised by those who still looked on these areas as sacred. Fr Shanahan would have been aware of the strong opposition to any interference with such sites in country places in Ireland – the fairy trees and the ring forts - and as he looked on himself as following in the footsteps of St Patrick in his methods of evangelising the pagan people of Ireland, he would take a sympathetic view of the people's reactions once he had realised that he was treading on their sacred ground. There is no precise record as to how the problem was eventually solved but other events beyond his control were to diffuse the situation in an unexpected way.³⁵

The choosing of a successor to Fr Lejeune and the future status of the Nigerian mission occupied minds during the autumn of 1905. Early in 1904, when there had been some dissatisfaction among his confreres with the leadership of Fr Lejeune, he had written about the matter to the Motherhouse as follows:

Fr Shanahan is dead set against the Alsatian members here and the Irish Brothers are also critical. That made me laugh in the beginning but when it became more serious I felt obliged to tell Shanahan that he was wrong on several points. The Alsatians are not less to blame: they accuse the Irish of working to get rid of me. I am here and I intend to remain on, but when I am gone a strong hand will be necessary who will not fear to slap both sides on the wrists. Is it to be an Irishman or an Alsatian? That is the question.³⁶

One young Frenchman, Fr Louis Lena, had no doubts about who should be appointed superior in succession to Fr Lejeune. As early as 29 December 1904 he wrote to Mgr Le Roy stating his opinion "that among those serving in the prefecture Fr Shanahan would be the most suitable to take charge. ." Fr J-B Pascal, the Assistant to the Superior General, who had special responsibility for dealing with the missions conducted by the Congregation Nigerian mission, warned the missionaries at Onitsha about dissensions and used the proverb: '*Divide et impera*' – Divide and conquer. Lejeune reported that Fr Shanahan, admitting that he had gone over the top in this controversy, had asked to be changed from Onitsha to Dekina to distance himself from the situation.³⁷

On arrival at Paris Fr Lejeune composed what was to be his last report on their mission in Nigeria – a very informative document giving a clear outline of the rapid development of the region since it had been taken out of the hands of the Royal Niger Company, which was motivated merely by commercial interests, and been administered directly by the British Government. The new civil situation gave great hopes for a more rapid missionary expansion calling for more authoritative leadership. He made this prophetic assessment:

The importance of the Lower Niger Mission, the importance of the entire Colony and the importance which the two are about to assume point to the fact that this mission now needs at the helm of affairs an authority much greater than mine, the authority of a bishop.³⁸

The previous year the mission conducted by the Congregation in Sierra Leone had been upgraded to being a vicariate – a mission headed by a bishop. One of the most promising members of the Congregation, Fr John O'Gorman, former professor in the senior Scholasticates in France and the USA, had been nominated bishop. Having

made a strong case for raising the status of the mission in S Nigeria to a vicariate Fr Lejeune made it clear that he did not want to be made bishop himself, but in case there was no such change of status he was ready to return as Prefect as hitherto. As to who should be appointed head of the mission if he were to be replaced he had very definite views. Not Fr Vogler whom he had deputed to act in his absence from the mission as

"He would turn the mission back to where it was before I came. Not Shanahan. He is zealous and good but has a too deep dislike – often manifested – for the French and the Alsatians. I would propose as candidate Fr Lena. His youth and his rather obvious timidity would be the sole obstacles that I would see to his being first on my list." Fr Lejeune added a postscript: "This letter should not remain in the archives after my death. I don't want people to speak well of me."

When it was obvious that Fr Lejeune was dying he was removed to Pasteur Hospital. As his pain was very severe it was suggested that he take a morphine injection. He refused saying: "I am getting only what I deserve... I was very hard on others and did not make any allowances for their sufferings. It is only just that I suffer in my turn". When one of the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny, the Sisters who worked with him in Gabon and Onitsha, said she would pray to their Foundress, Mother Javouhey, for a miraculous cure for him he remarked "No. She won't listen as I was too hard on some her Sisters." Then he added with a smile: "But I wasn't always wrong."³⁹ It is said that on his deathbed he sent a message to Mgr Le Roy recommending Fr Shanahan as his successor and saying, "That young Irishman has the soul of an apostle". Fr Lejeune died on 6 September 1905 aged forty-five.

When the news of Fr Lejeune's death reached Nigeria a solemn requiem Mass was celebrated at Onitsha on 4 October for the repose of his soul. The principal celebrant was Fr Pat McDermott, the senior member of the mission, Fr Shanahan was the deacon and Fr Jules Douvry the subdeacon. Naturally while there was much to be said on that occasion about Fr Lejeune, the man and his work, what was uppermost in all minds was who was to succeed him. Though Fr Vogler had been asked to take charge when Fr Lejeune left for France it was thought that the new man might be a bishop from outside as had happened recently in Sierra Leone.

Mgr Le Roy wrote to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda in Rome to inform him officially of the death of Fr Lejeune and submitted as required the three names of suitable candidates. He gave the main points in favour of each as follows: Fr Joseph Ignatius Shanahan, 35 years old, Irish; Fr Louis Joseph Lena, 31 years old, French; Fr Louis, Napoleon Charles Vogler, 36 years old, Alsace, Strasbourg Diocese. But even though Fr Vogler had come to Onitsha in 1895, spoke German, French, English and Igbo, and Fr Lena also spoke English and the local dialects at Onitsha and though both were described as excellent missionaries, Shanahan was judged the most prudent and most capable of the three. In these confidential reports Mgr Le Roy clearly indicated his preference for Shanahan. No doubt as he flicked through Shanahan's personal dossier which contained his personal letters as a student he had his opinion confirmed in that even at an early age he had displayed in his letters remarkable common sense and maturity. So it was as if he was repeating what he had written to the Irish Provincial, Fr Larry Healy, on 17 July 1902 but giving it a new emphasis: "*Je compte toujours sur le P. Shanahan*" – I continue to count on Fr Shanahan.

It is possible, however, that a major consideration for Mgr Le Roy was that, Nigeria being now a British Protectorate, a French man would not be enthusiastically welcomed there as head of the mission. There was ample evidence that the directors

of the Royal Niger Company, which oversaw British involvement in Nigeria in the matter of trade for many years, had showed a marked disapproval of French merchants and missionaries operating in the area. Rome concurred with Mgr Le Roy's judgement and officially confirmed Fr Shanahan's appointment as Prefect Apostolic of Lower Nigeria on 27 September 1905. No request had been made at this stage to have the mission recognised as a vicariate requiring a bishop at its head.

Rome's decision was notified by letter to Mgr Le Roy as Superior General and was passed on by letter to Fr Shanahan. About the reception of this letter in Onitsha we read in the mission Journal kept there as follows:

3 Nov. First Friday. Mail arrives from the Motherhouse. One addressed to V Rev Fr Shanahan, Superior RCM Nsugbe. We are all regretting that he is not present. In the meantime we hold on to the letter, writing to him to come himself to Onitsha. We suspect that he is to be our newly appointed Apostolic Prefect. Br Anther, who has been staying at Onitsha for three weeks, now is leaving for Nsugbe with a letter for Fr Shanahan.

Sunday: Fr Shanahan is not coming and Fr Vogler has not found his field glasses. At 10.15 arrival of Fr Shanahan. We hand him the said letter. He opens it and sees to his great astonishment that the eyes of the Sovereign Pontiff are being set on him and he is appointed Apostolic Prefect of Southern Nigeria.⁴⁰

Fr Shanahan's reply to Mgr Le Roy reads as follows:

Personal

Monseignor and Very Reverent Father

Never before has such unexpected news reached the Lower Niger as that of the appointment of the present Prefect Apostolic. All of us here expected to see coming here a Bishop having the vigorous qualities necessary to continue and complete the work, which began so well with poor Fr. Lejeune whom we all miss.

It was all the more necessary to have such a man as our ranks have been cruelly decimated this year by illness and by death. We needed someone capable of replacing those heroes. In choosing me, the Good Lord wants us to remember that He alone is everything, man, the instrument which he uses, nothing.

However, let your will be always done, O my God, mine never!

Thank you, Monseigneur, for your encouraging and affectionate words. Thank you for the trust you have shown in me in putting me in the most difficult and the most dangerous post in this terrible battlefield on the banks of the Niger. You can, I believe, count on all of us here to continue courageously God's work in this area.

At present, we are all one. May Jesus Christ keep us always thus.

Good example, religious regularity, apostolic zeal, and absolute obedience to all your commands, counsel and advice will be the object of all the efforts of the missionaries of the Lower Niger.

Please, believe, Monseigneur, in my filial affection and obedience.
J Shanahan.⁴¹

Significantly in his first official report as head of the mission he deals with the state of the schools. Their schools have been examined officially for the first time. He also mentions that they are insisting as from then on that all members of the mission stations should learn Igbo. Fr Vogler is to preach in Igbo on 24 November. Next he

deals with administrative matters: Br Othrain Casey is due for renewal of vows; he does his work well and is animated with a good spirit. This comment is of note as Fr Lejeune in his final report on the mission had been critical of Br Othrain.⁴²

His next report is addressed to Mgr Le Roy and through him to the Director of the Holy Childhood from whom financial aid for their mission schools was expected. Naturally the main emphasis is on schools. He mentions that as Fr McDermot is 'Minister General for schools' it is for him to send the general report, and he mentions that as Br David Doran feels that he is growing old he asks to be sent to Ogboli to work with Fr McDermott. He could do great services in the school there. So one senses that already Fr Shanahan is in command and at ease with general strategy and the ordinary nitty-gritty of human relations and that he shows a compassionate approach to his men.⁴³

The major problem, however, aired by Fr Shanahan and singled out for publication in the *Bulletin Général*, was significantly the future of schools in the colony. His message in that extract was decidedly upbeat:

A good victory for us this very day! In a big meeting presided over by the High Commissioner himself, it has been decided that all schools in Southern Nigeria, irrespective of their confession, will be equally favoured by the Government. Now, thanks to the work done by our confreres, our schools, recently visited by the inspectors, have been declared excellent and up to the standard of the grand 'Institute' of Calabar where the Presbyterians have worked for 60 years, and where the Government has expended thousands of pounds sterling.

A jury of three members has been named by the Government to provide a new programme for all the schools of this part of the protectorate where our establishments are situated, and to determine the subsidies that should be allocated to each school. I am a member of that commission: it is a good affair for us.⁴⁴

It sounds somewhat ironic that Fr Shanahan, who had stated in his official application for being allowed to make his profession in the Congregation that he had no ambitions to spend his life in the classroom – that he was longing to go to work on the missions, now found himself gradually forced to the conclusion that the future of the mission depended on the success of their schools. Fr Lejeune had already come to that conclusion when he wrote to Mgr Le Roy saying that schools were so important that if they could not staff them themselves that a request should be made to the Christian Brothers to open a high school as the government and commercial firms would be on the look out for well-trained personnel. The mission would need such advanced students to act as catechists and in time the parents would be influenced by their children. Education is the future solution for evangelisation in Africa – East as well as West.⁴⁵ But it would take time to realise this dream.

In his next few letters the main preoccupations are impending changes in government policy in the matter of hospitals and schools – all matters confronting the new Prefect Apostolic and calling for well thought-out decisions. The government had new plans and regulations for the running of hospitals. They were envisaging handing over control of a hospital to the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny, but there were some problems about the Sisters not being ready to undertake such work. Fr Shanahan, who sees this offer as a new form of evangelisation, is not afraid to suggest that it might be time to enlist the services of another religious society to cope with this new situation:

It seems that the question of the hospital has been misunderstood by the Very Rev. Mother of the St. Joseph Sisters. Yet Fr. Lejeune had sent the conditions imposed by the Government. It is one of these conditions which causes difficulties. The Government demands that the Sisters of the Hospital go home every year. It is the sine qua non condition for their presence in the hospital. Being given the great influence which the Sisters will very quickly have on the natives, the great spiritual good they will be able to do, it would perhaps be good for them to accept for some time the conditions which are imposed and accepted on both sides. The chief medical officer told me the other day that they intend to establish several hospitals in the colony, beginning with Onitsha, and they want to ask the Sisters to take charge of them. It is a good opportunity to help the people of the Lower Niger. And now that the financial resources are so limited, it is a question which demands thought. If the St. Joseph Sisters cannot accept the present conditions, would it not be desirable to find another congregation of 'Hospital Sisters' who would accept them?⁴⁶

This was to be a problem that was to occupy him for many years to come.

One of the official chores to which Fr Shanahan had to attend was to draw up the list of personnel and the works being undertaken by the Mission for publication in the *État du Personnel* or Directory of the Congregation for 1906. There were five mission stations in all. Dekina had now ceased to be listed. These were served by 10 priests, seven Brothers, 8 Sisters and 12 official Catechists. Two members are listed as being home for a break in France, Fr Lena and Br Anthère. About Nsugbe in particular he wrote that the priest in charge was Fr Herry assisted by Br Eucher, that there were two catechists, twelve boarders, fifty day students and forty adult Christian students. The total number of students attending the mission schools is given as ca 700 and the number of Catholics in the Prefecture is calculated as ca 2,000.⁴⁷ This was not a lot to show for a mission begun in 1885 and certainly not a mission that could expect to be raised to the status of a Vicariate with a resident bishop. With the limited number of personnel there was little hope of a rapid expansion in the foreseeable future unless some new approach was taken, and with Shanahan in charge that could be counted on sooner rather than later.

The health of his missionaries was a major concern for Shanahan considering the paucity of their number and the vastness of the area to be served. One of his key men, Fr Louis Lena, had to return to France due to illness and, as Fr Shanahan had to remark on the fact that he had not received any letter from headquarters since he had been appointed Prefect, he added that a word from Fr Lena would have pleased him. To soften the hint as it were he added, "The Whites and Blacks are unanimous in speaking of the good he has done. All of them are anxious to see him come back." Br Anthère, who had worked in Dekina, had also returned ill to France. But the really sad news that Fr Shanahan had to report was that his other confrere at Dekina, Fr Paul Herry, was terminally ill with tuberculosis and that he would have to return immediately to France.⁴⁸ As against all these casualties he was glad to report that Br Hermes, one of those who had arrived in Nigeria with the founder of the Mission, was still going strong and "anxious to do all he can".

Seeing what was needed to expand their evangelisation work was to have more men and more money Fr Shanahan put his case strongly in his first report to Propaganda Fide as early as December 1905. Having outlined the mortality rate and the ravages inflicted on so many of his little team he makes the case for several more men and for the money to provide proper accommodation for them. He also lists the recent expansion through schools manned by lay catechists, but again these had to be

paid. He gives facts and figures to back up his case. It is clear from this report that he had not merely a vision for the future but a clear grasp of detail.⁴⁹

Back home in France the Congregation was facing other problems. The virulent anti-clerical measures taken by the Combes regime had almost threatened the existence of the Congregation. Under the level-headed leadership of the Superior General, Mgr Le Roy, the worst of that storm had been weathered and though many of the houses and works of the Congregation had ceased to operate an effort was made to carry on as normal. One major decision that had to be taken, namely whether or not to convene the General Chapter of the Congregation which according to Rule was due to be convened in 1906. It was decided to go ahead with this event and the venue was fixed for France. Among the official delegated were all the heads of missions. In that capacity Fr Shanahan was summoned to attend the Chapter scheduled for July 1906.⁵⁰

As Fr Shanahan set out for Europe he took along with him Fr Paul Herry, whose brief tryst with life on the missions was over. As they called to Freetown they were joined by Bishop John O'Gorman, who had been appointed the first Vicar Apostolic there in 1903. The last time Shanahan had been in contact with Dr O'Gorman was when he had served as assistant Master of novices during the year in which Fr Shanahan had done his novitiate. In the meantime he had served in the senior scholasticate in the USA.

Having arrived in England Fr Paul Herry went to the Spiritan community house in Prior Park, Bath, where Fr Joseph Lichtenberger, his former superior in Dekina, was acting for the moment as bursar. Fr Paul was later to move to a sanatorium in France for medical attention. His case was terminal and as death approached he asked to be taken to Langonnet in his native Brittany to die among the members of the Congregation. Fr Herry died on 5 August 1907 aged 30 years.

Having arrived at Liverpool on 16 May 1906 Dr Shanahan crossed over to Ireland and went direct to the Provincialate at Clareville from where he had set out for Africa in September 1902. The following day he wrote to Mgr Le Roy to announce his arrival and his plans:

Yesterday 16 May I disembarked at Liverpool at the same time as Mgr O'Gorman, a Sister from Freetown and poor Fr Herry. The last mentioned is very ill – so ill that I did not think he was capable of making the journey to Paris. So he is gone by Express to Bath, (Prior Park where the Congregation had recently acquired a house) spend a few days to regain his strength.

I have come here to Ireland in order to see if there is any means to acquire any help for our poor mission. There are so many bishops around here at the moment that the chances of acquiring any resources are very slim.

Would you be so kind as to agree that I accompany Mgr to Rome. The purpose would be to make our mission and our needs known *viva voce*, and perhaps also to obtain some lines of recommendation from a Cardinal for bishops in Ireland and England. That is a favour for which I would be very grateful.

There are many Fathers and Brothers here who are willing to come to Nigeria. I have not seen them all yet. If you are willing to say the word go they would do so with a heart and a half.

I hope to go to Paris in a few weeks. At the moment I am so fatigued from the long journey. I hope to write a longer letter in a few days when I get over the effects of the sea voyage.

As no journal has survived from that community we must depend on entries made by

Fr Ebenrecht in the Blackrock College community journal. Fr Ebenrecht informs us that Bishop Allgeyer arrived on 15 May from East Africa. Two days later he had this entry:

Fr Shanahan arrived last evening at Clareville. He dined here today. He looks well. This was one of the coldest days of the whole year. The wind from the north was icy and killing. Impossible to face it.

19 May: Mr James O'Connor, Barrister, sent his motor car to be at Dr Allgeyer's disposal as yesterday.

Today the motorcar brought Fr Shanahan and Fr Ebenrecht to Mount Sackville, where they dined with Fr Healy (Provincial) who was there for confessions...

Fr Ebenrecht returned for the 5 o'clock confessions by motorcar to Chapelizod. The Bishop and party returned under a teeming rain, wet to skin.

For Fr Shanahan, who later loved to travel the roads of Ireland in the 'Isis' – the motorcar lent to him by his sister - this was the first occasion for him to enjoy, if we may use the word, travel by motorcar.

The following day Bishop O'Gorman arrived at Blackrock and is recorded as having said the College mass for the students. While there are several references in the following days to both Bishops O'Gorman and Allgeyer there is no reference to Fr Shanahan. One takes it for granted that he had gone to stay with his family in Maynooth and perhaps in Tipperary. As he called to his relatives in Templederry where motorcars were as yet a rarity he borrowed a horse to go on a journey. Unfortunately he got caught again in a downpour which lasted so long that he was drenched to the skin and decided to call in to a house on the roadside. As the rain persisted he was offered lodgings for the night but beds were scarce and not wanting to disturb the family he sat by the fireside to dry his clothes. The woman of the house sat up with him listening through the night to his stories about Africa.

From a letter written by Br Osmond Healy, who was stationed at Clareville at the time, we learn of one bit of recruiting done by Fr Shanahan for his mission. Br Osmond had served for a period in The Gambia in charge of the mission primary school. Unfortunately he and the French superior did not see eye to eye about the way the school was to be run with the result that Br Osmond found himself adrift. Having returned to Ireland he was for the moment serving in the Provincial house where he made it his business to speak to Fr Shanahan. Both being from Tipperary Fr Shanahan felt he could do business with Br Osmond in spite of his reputed irascible temper. He was delighted to be able to offer him a place in his mission. Br Osmond wrote immediately on 23 May 1906, to the Motherhouse to be allowed to accept the offer. All were relieved by this turn of events.⁵¹

For June 5 Fr Ebenrecht has the following entry:

For dinner at 5 o'clock in No. 5 Room (the Reception room where Fr Shanahan had attended his first retreat as priest in 1901). Present were Mgr Allgeyer, Mgr O'Gorman, Mgr Moysteen (Wales), Fr J. Shanahan, Monsig Fitzpatrick, Monsig O'Donnell and a number of priests including St Mary's, Rathmines, and Clareville. Before the dinner a group was taken of our two bishops and Fr Shanahan as a parting souvenir. They may well say, "When shall we three meet again?"

8 June, Friday Mgr Allgeyer left from Clareville by morning mail. Mgr O'Gorman said the 7.15 am mass here and he dined with us - his parting dinner. Fr Shanahan was with him. Both left by evening mail....The Lord Lieutenant and her Ladyship travelled by the same packet across.

From the account published in the *Bulletin Général* we learn about the main events of the Chapter which began with the reading of a lengthy report on the Congregation since the last Chapter ten years earlier. The various commissions then got down to discussing the problems facing the Congregation in the coming years. This was followed by the elections of the incoming administration.

The heads of missions reported in some depth to the Superior General and to the Counsellor with special responsibilities for Missions, namely Fr J-B Paschal. Then the Bishops, availing of their presence in Europe, set off for Rome to report to the Congregation of Propaganda and to make a case for funds for their mission. Fr Shanahan accompanied Mgr O'Gorman, who had done his studies in Rome, in order to familiarise himself with the landscape and officialdom of Rome.

On his journey to Rome Fr Shanahan stopped off at Suze in the Italian Alps where St Joseph's Apostolic School, which originated in France, had taken refuge from the Combes anti-clerical regime. This was the school that had been attended by Joseph, 1886-89, when it was located in Beauvais. While staying in Suse he wrote a letter to his father on the back of a postcard picture of St Joseph:

"My Dearest Father,

It was at the foot of this statue of St Joseph that I said my first prayers in France twenty-one years ago, prayers in which your name and Mother's were surely mentioned. The French persecution has driven St Joseph from France. Fancy my delight to see the good St Joseph once again here in the heart of the Italian Alps. Needless to say, your name with Mother's, not forgetting Bridie, Dan and all the absent ones, were once more mentioned in prayer before the venerable saint. May his blessing and protection ever be with you.

On Monday I go to Rome. Don't forget me in the Rosary. I want to obtain very special assistance, which humanly speaking, I won't get; but if you pray hard to St Joseph I am sure all my wishes will be realised – the more so as they are for all those I love, at home, and for those other ones equally dear to me in distant Africa.

Good bye for the present, with my best love to Mother and all at home. St Joseph's blessing on us all, and he is your own Saint, Father. Do not forget it. He will be your best friend to the end."

He also wrote a note to his brother Dick whose study of the ancient classics would have empathy with other aspects of the life around Suse:

To Mr R. Shanahan, Templederry, Co. Tipperary.

"This is the heart of the Italian Alps, where the smallest mountain is seven thousand feet high, the highest about thirteen thousand. Winter is there above on the top of the hills, and here within a few yards away one would imagine is the most beautiful of the Italian summers; grapes, cherries, fruits of every description are just outside my window, and even the bees are not wanting! A grand opportunity to study the "Georgics" – the doughty Roman warriors alone seem to have changed. One of them carried a bag of mine yesterday, ten yards; ten franks asked – a small battle; the warrior defeated – threatened to tell Caesar to get the lictors to haul me up. Where will you hear from me next?
J.S.⁵²

While in Rome Bishop O'Gorman and Fr Shanahan – as well as the other heads of missions – stayed at the French Seminary, Sta Chiara, which was under the direction of members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.

Having returned to Ireland Fr Shanahan naturally wanted to relax with his own family members in Maynooth and Templederry. While in Tipperary he called to

Rockwell. Unfortunately the only contemporary reference we find to his visit is in the Juniorate Journal where there is this entry for 14 September: "Mass was celebrated this morning in St Joseph's by Revd Fr Shanahan, Vicar (*recte* Prefect) Apostolic of S. Nigeria."

The Juniorate journal at Blackrock is a bit more informative about when Fr Shanahan called there on 10 October 1906:

6.30 pm Conference from the Rev. Fr Shanahan, Vic. Ap (*sic*) of Nigeria.

a) The Irish Apostle to Europe of old; now to Africa

b) Some different cases of baptisms amongst the blacks, young and old

c) The happiness of the Missioner

Sat 13 Solemn Benediction given by Fr Shanahan

Not having a financial account of his own in Ireland Fr Shanahan was happy to do business through the bursar at Blackrock. The College account book gives us a glimpse of some of the expenses he incurred at this time.

Fr Ebenrech had his own angle on Fr Shanahan's visit to Blackrock

October 15 Monday Fr Shanahan and Br Osmond Healy are preparing to start for Africa. The Brother, formerly in S. Leone (*recte* The Gambia) is going to the Lower Niger with the Pro Vic Ap Fr Shanahan. Fr Ebenrech obtained from some convents second-hand vestments, cope etc. which they take with them.

Tuesday Fr Shanahan is packing up for L Niger. Fr Ebenrech gave him vestments etc, etc. received for the missions in reply to articles in the *Irish Catholic*.

Wed. Fr Shanahan and Bro Osmond Healy left this evening for Liverpool by the Northwall boat. Fr Superior and Fr Ebenrech saw him off. There were 10 fathers and Brothers to see them off at the North Wall.

1 *Go Teach All Nations*, pp85ff

2 *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985* pp10ff, pp27ff

3 *Blackrock College Annual 1993* p.11f

4 *Spiritan Nigeria Memorial* by Henry J Koren CSSp No. 21

5 For brief biographies of the personnel of Irish connection cf. *Irish Spiritans Remembered* by Sean Farragher CSSp; for all Spiritans who served in Southern Nigeria cf. *Spiritan Nigeria Memorial* by Henry J Koren CSSp

6 As recalled by Mother Xavier OP, who played such an important role in the formation of the first members of The Holy Rosary Sisters founded by Bishop Shanahan. She related this statement to Fr Michael O'Carroll CSSp

7 McDermot to Le Roy 12 December 1902

8 Lejeune to Le Roy 26/11/02 Arch.Gen Boite 192/BIV

9 *Missionary Annals 1936* pp154ff

10 *Ibid.* p.156

11 Lejeune to Le Roy 02/03/1903

12 *Idem* 20 Jan 1904

13 *Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria* by John Jordan CSSp p.25f

14 BG XXII 789ff

15 Cited by Fr Vincent O'Toole CSSp in *First contacts of the Spiritans with the middle belt of Nigeria* (Aug 1996) p.8f

16 Koren, *op.cit.* No. 22

17 ISR No. 453

18 BG XXII pp794ff

19 Lejeune to Le Roy 26 March 1904.

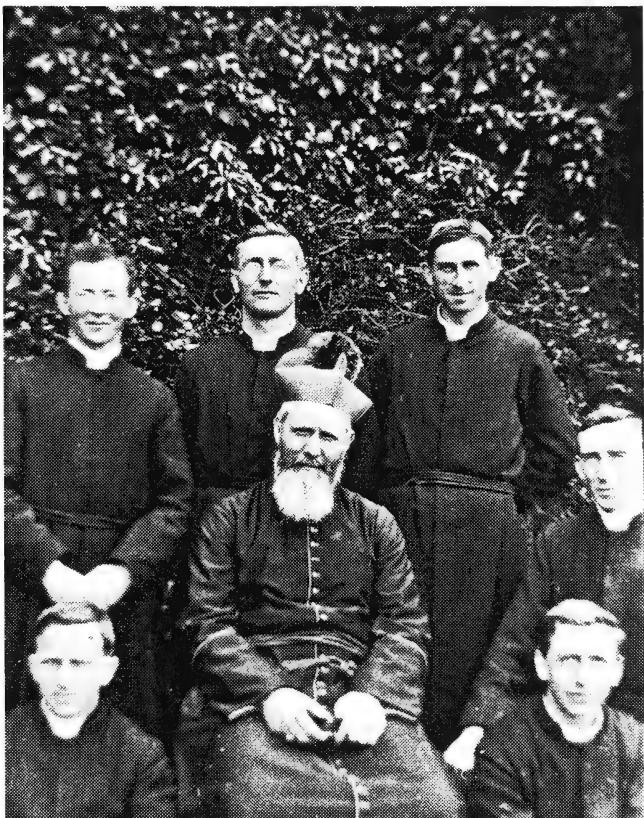
20 Shanahan report, 6 May 1910 p.7 on 'Training School for S. Nigeria' mentions his experience at Ogboli Boite 191B VI

21 MA 1936 p.157

22 Shanahan to Lejeune 29 August 1904

23 Shanahan to Lejeune 12 September 1904
24 Shanahan to Lejeune 11 October 1904
25 (Lejeune to Le Roy 26 March 1904;) Shanahan to Lejeune 24 October 1904 Arch. Gen Boite 192/B III
26 *Notices Biographiques* Vol 3 pp 9124f; For Fr Herry's own descriptions of life in Dekina cf. BG.XXII pp445 and 447
27 O'Toole op.cit p.14f
28 *Ibid* p.14; Arch. Lejeune to Le Roy 6 January 1905 Gen Boite 192BIII
29 MA 1936 p.157f
30 BCA 1935 pp9ff
31 Shanahan to Paschal , 13 May 1905, GenArch
32 Shanahan to Le Roy 23/08/05 Arch. Gen Boite 192/I IV
33 NB Vol 3 p.125
34 BG XXI 519ff, *Ibid* XXII p.793f
35 A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985 pp90f;
The second burial of Bishop Shanahan by Desmond Forristal p.60
36 Lejeune to Le Roy 20 January 1904 Arch. Gen.
37 Lejeune to Le Roy 26 March 1904
38 *Idem* 24 April 1905 B192/A/05
39 BG XXIII p.501
40 Nigeria Journal 1885-1912 Arch. Gen. Boite 554 4-1
41 Shanahan to Le Roy 13/11/05 Arch. Gen. B101 File IV
42 Shanahan to Le Roy 13/11/05
43 Shanahan to Le Roy 04/12/05
44 Shanahan to Le Roy 27/12/05; BG XXIII p.581
45 Lejeune to Le Roy 20/10/04; BG XXIV pp 143ff
46 Shanahan to Le Roy 24/01/06
47 *État du Personnel* 1906 p.33f
48 Shanahan to Le Roy 21/03/06
49 Shanahan to Le Roy and Propaganda Fide 03/12/05 Arch. Gen. Boite/192/A/04
50 BG XXIII p.423, 463, 607, 675f
51 Cf. Br Osmond Healy's personal papers Arch. Gen. and ISR No. 492
52 HRS Gen. Archives

Ordained Bishop 1920



Bishop Shanahan with a group of seminarians in Kimmage 1920

When Shanahan left Nigeria for Europe in July 1919 he had several pressing objectives in mind. He was in urgent need of medical attention in the wake of his punishing trek to the Cameroon, but he hoped to be sufficiently restored to health to be able to participate in the General Chapter of the Congregation, which was scheduled for the end of August. This being the first opportunity since the war for the Congregation to take stock of its situation, it promised to be of special importance. Fr Shanahan's main preoccupation, however, was to enlist some new personnel in France and in Ireland. He was only too well aware that the harvest was great but he also knew that the labourers were few in the aftermath of the War. Priests were vitally needed. So also were Sisters who were specially dedicated to the missions.

Shanahan usually loved his journeys by sea; they allowed him to relax, to regroup his thoughts and renew his flagging energies. This particular voyage however, did little to improve his condition. After his famous four months punishing trek to the Cameroon he had been hospitalised for some six weeks at Duala military hospital suffering from intestinal trouble. When he had recovered he wanted to stay on to catch up on the arrears of work as so many were absent from Nigeria through illness.¹ He had also hoped to attend the ordination of his trusted catechist Joe Delaney for whom he had requested an indult that he might be ordained without having to go through the customary seminary training because of the shortage of priests. The indult was late in arriving and Shanahan received orders from the Mother House to come home immediately for a rest.² He had intended to go direct to Paris but was booked for Liverpool. On arriving at Sierra Leone on the homeward voyage he took seriously ill with a sudden attack of appendicitis accompanied with inflammation of the bowels. His life was feared for. To the amazement of the doctor he managed to get over to Dublin from Liverpool. On arriving on 4 August, he had to be taken direct to St Vincent's Hospital where he was put under the care of Dr J.B. Magennis. He was to remain in hospital all through the month of August and up till the middle of September. At one stage there were even fears for his survival.³

One consequence of his protracted hospitalisation was that he was unable to attend the General Chapter to participate in the discussions and state the case for Nigeria in the matter of its special needs. He was not the only Irish delegate from the missions to miss the chapter through illness. Bishop John Neville had taken so seriously ill during his voyage from East Africa that the medical team on board ship feared for his survival and had him taken to hospital immediately on docking at Southampton. Word was cabled to Ireland to have some one come over to take charge of him. Fr Michael Downey, Superior of Blackrock, was commissioned to undertake the mercy journey, that being his second such crossing in a matter of weeks. On 16 July he had crossed to Holyhead to supervise the funeral arrangements for Fr Thomas Pembroke, editor of the newly launched *Missionary Annals* and director of Mission Promotions, who had died suddenly on the boat as he travelled to England.

Another missionary bishop who had returned home for the Chapter, Mgr John O'Gorman, also required hospital treatment on arrival from Sierra Leone. He, however, was discharged from hospital in time to travel to France for the Chapter. Before leaving he was called on to perform a brief ceremony, namely to open officially the Donnybrook Fair or Bazaar being held in the grounds of Blackrock College. The main purpose of the Bazaar was to raise funds for the renovation of Donnybrook church, but it combined also a Missionary Exhibition for the purpose of

raising funds for the missions headed by Bishops Neville and O'Gorman, and Fr Shanahan.

The idea of combining the Donnybrook Fair and a Missionary Exhibition came from Sr Joseph Conception Vavasour, superioress of the Sisters of Charity at Merrion Home for the Blind. Sr Joseph had long been a staunch supporter of the foreign missions and had been among those who had volunteered in 1914 to go with Fr Shanahan to open a community in Nigeria in order to help in the mission schools etc.⁴

This missionary exhibition must have been the first such public demonstration of support for the foreign (pagan) missions at parish level, and it was symptomatic of the dawn of a new era which had been introduced by the launching of the Maynooth Mission to China a few short years earlier. The Senior Scholastics of the Holy Ghost Congregation, who had been on holidays at Blackrock from Kimmage and St Mary's, Rathmines, were naturally pressed into service as stewards etc. during the Bazaar, especially in manning the Missionary Exhibition. One feature of the exhibition was the putting on sale of the first-ever issue of the Holy Ghost missionary magazine known then as the *Missionary Record* but soon to be renamed as the *Missionary Annals*. The illustrations for this first issue had been taken care of by Fr Jim Burke, science professor at Blackrock, who was soon to compose the 'Missionary Hymn'. Fr Edward Leen had contributed an excellent article on the mission headed by his former 'prefect' and Dean of discipline in Rockwell, Fr Shanahan.⁵ Ten thousand copies of the magazine were disposed of during the fair.

The man mainly responsible for mounting the missionary exhibition was Fr Thady O'Connor who had been director of the first teacher training college launched in Nigeria at Igbariam, but due to ill health he had been forced to return to Ireland for the moment. While recuperating he had taken an active part in the effort being made to mount an effective missions-promotion movement in Ireland - a work that had been begun by Fr John M Ebenrech many years earlier and taken up by Fr Pembroke in recent years. Fr Thady made good use of the 'magic lantern' for the projection of slides on the missions, and in the production of these slides, copied from photographs and books, he resumed his former partnership with Fr Jim Burke who had initiated him into this arcane art when they were students together in Chevilly in France. Now Fr Burke was endeavouring to train some of the younger generation, among them Mr John Charles McQuaid, future archbishop of Dublin, who also manned one of the stalls at the exhibition.

Another future archbishop - Shanahan's successor, in fact - Mr Charlie Heerey, is mentioned in despatches at this period as 'auxiliary' or student in charge of the senior scholastics then on holidays in Blackrock. He and his life-long friend, Joe Horgan, are mentioned as being the handball aces at the sports they organised at Blackrock during that summer. Fr Thady O'Connor is on record as having taken an active interest in these sports. He provided a substantial contribution to the prize fund. And later, when they resumed their studies in Kimmage and St Mary's, Rathmines, they were pleasantly surprised to learn from the Director, Fr John Kearney, that Fr Thady had arranged for them all to go on a picnic to Co. Wicklow at his expense "in consideration of the strenuous work we did in preparation for the Donnybrook fair and the Blackrock Carnival...In the opinion of all it was by far the most enjoyable outing that had been experienced by the Scholastics of either house and for which they were all unanimous in offering a vote of thanks to the Rev T O'Connor".

It was this generous, dashing and enterprising spirit, no doubt, that had

endeared Fr Thady to Shanahan who had known him as a student in Rockwell. In the months ahead he would be very close to Shanahan as he deputised for him while he tried to cope with prolonged periods of inactivity when he was confined to hospital.⁶

On leaving hospital Fr Shanahan had the option of staying with his sister, Mrs Dawson, in Maynooth, or taking up residence in the Provincialate which at that time was located at St Mary's, Rathmines, where the secondary school had been closed since 1916.

In a brief letter to Mgr Le Roy as he regrets his state of health which had prevented him from attending the General Chapter and the ordination of Fr Joe Delaney on which he had set such importance he makes the comment: "It is good to realise practically that one is nothing and that the small role we play in this world counts for little..."

Stationed also at St Mary's there were the students who were attending courses at UCD or doing their philosophy course at home under the direction of a special staff. The house journal kept by these students enables us to keep tag of the arrivals and departures of distinguished visitors even if we get no further information about their business. From this journal we learn that Fr Shanahan was there for dinner on 16 September 1919, and that the Provincial, Fr Con O'Shea, had arrived home from the General Chapter. Bishop O'Gorman is mentioned as arriving the following day. Nothing of what was reported to Fr Shanahan about the Chapter or other matters of state has percolated into the journal jottings.

From other sources we gather that even while Shanahan had been confined to hospital he had been busy with imaginative projects connected with his mission. Having seen that one of his leading missionaries, Fr Thady O'Connor, was obliged on medical advice to absent himself for two years from the tropics and that Fr Edward Leen, the Director of the Senior Scholasticate had been advised also on medical grounds, to take a total break from academia he came up with the suggestion that Fr O'Connor be seconded to the Senior Seminary in an auxiliary role and that Fr Leen take his place for the moment in Nigeria. From a long letter to the Superior General we learn of his plans:

The doctor says Fr Leen is suffering from neurasthenia and is in need of a complete change of work and environment and Africa would give that change that is so necessary. Fr Provincial knows about the situation. I spoke to him this morning and said to him how necessary it was to take immediate precautions to safeguard the health and the life of this excellent priest. I proposed to leave him Fr Thady O'Connor in exchange for Fr Leen. He accepted... Fr O'Connor could give valuable service to the Senior Scholasticate in Ireland. He has the experience acquired during seven years of hard work in Nigeria. He could strengthen more and more the apostolic spirit among our Scholastics. His collaboration in the production of the *Missionary Record* would be almost indispensable. The departure of Fr Leen would be a veritable triumph for the missions over the Colleges mentality.⁷

In the same letter he refers to a major project that was very near to his heart, namely the opening of negotiations to secure the services of religious Sisters for work in Nigeria. He mentions that while in hospital he was already in negotiations with the Irish Sisters of Charity about the matter and that he hoped to have further news on that topic in the near future.

When home in Ireland in August 1914, Shanahan had been in contact with the Irish Sisters of Charity who had given reason to hope that a group of Irish Sisters

might come to Nigeria. The financial and other considerations were discussed through the intermediary of the Mother Rectress of one of their communities, most likely Mother Arsenius of the Foxford community, but in the event no agreement had been reached at the time.⁸ Some of those who had volunteered, however, retained their interest in the project. Shanahan's immediate contact in 1919 was again Sr Joseph Vavasour, Mother Rectress of the community at Merrion.⁹ She had kept up an active interest in the foreign missions culminating in helping to launch the Missionary Exhibition – known as The Donnybrook Fair - in August of that year. On visiting Shanahan in hospital she offered to reopen the Nigeria project with the Mother General, Mother Agnes Gertrude, who had been re-elected in 1915. A meeting was arranged where a commission of Sisters who had studied Shanahan's proposition, would discuss their reactions to it with him. It was suggested that a list of probable volunteers for the Nigeria mission be drawn up. Mother Arsenius of Foxford community of Sisters of Charity wrote to Mother Vavasour on 9 September outlining the approach to take in the upcoming meeting with Fr Shanahan. Shanahan himself kept his superior General, Mgr Le Roy au fait with the negotiations for Sisters to replace the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny who had withdrawn from Nigeria. On 25 September he had a meeting with Mother Arsenius and Sister Charles Walker of the Foxford community who were particularly favourable to the Nigeria project.

Shanahan had been requested to put his proposals in writing in order to give the Mother General and her advisers sufficient opportunity to evaluate them. In his written statement he gave the general statistics about the situation in the mission and then went on to outline the areas of the apostolate where it was envisaged that the Sisters might play a special role. Quoting from Shanahan's submission:

to children

The work envisaged for them would be mainly catechetical instruction
and adults, preparing them for the sacraments; visiting the sick; teaching in
elementary schools; taking charge of sodalities and looking after churches.

Sisters trained in hospital work would be invaluable.

Having gone into some details about conditions of schools in the matter of standards and remuneration, he comes to what was for him the special contribution that religious Sisters alone at this stage could contribute to the work of establishing a Christian ethos in Nigeria among womenfolk. "What is most needed," he wrote, "is the general influence of the Sisters on the character of the girls. The women and girls would respond to and appreciate the Sisters' efforts. There is great need for sodalities..."

Shanahan mentions in his correspondence with the Mother House that a rumour had reached Ireland that he had been unfair in his treatment of the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny who had already been working in Nigeria. The Sisters had asked for a clear statement about the situation. Shanahan went to some pains to assure them that their case was entirely different. Being French they found it frustrating to have to try to cope with conditions – particularly in schools - as a proper command of English was required in a country where English was the official language. Furthermore, their rule being too restrictive did not allow them to go out and about among the people as required by the mission situation in Nigeria. Finally, their lack of numbers made their contribution rather insignificant. There were only three of them there and the only one who could take charge of the school was so ill that her life was feared for.¹⁰

After his meeting with the Sisters of Charity Fr Shanahan was discharged from St Vincent's for the moment. The Provincial, Fr O'Shea, wrote to Paris as follows:

Fr Shanahan has improved during the week. He has gone to the west of Ireland to the college of the Missionaries to China (Dangan, near Shrue, Co Galway). He returns today and next week the doctor will launch Roentgen Rays (X-Rays) to see what is wrong with his interior. Dr Magennis will not perform an operation until it is absolutely necessary and he is greatly pleased with the improvement of his patient.

While Shanahan was awaiting a reply from the Sisters of Charity to his memorandum he seems to have spent most of the time at St Mary's, Rathmines. There he had the company of Fr Thady O'Connor and Fr Henry Gogarty, who was home on leave from East Africa where he had been chaplain to the British forces during the war. Both these men were making themselves available for talks on the missions as required. There was also a stream of visitors calling on the Provincial, Fr Con O'Shea, including the American delegates to the General Chapter, Frs Eugene Phelan and Martin Hehir. Fr Shanahan is mentioned occasionally in the students' journal as having given Benediction or having said the early mass for the students.

For 7 October 1919, the Feast of the Holy Rosary, we switch our listening post to Kimmage Manor where besides the novices there were the students who were studying theology. Fr Hugh Evans, as well as being Master of Novices, was Superior of the whole community - Fr John Kearney being the Director of the Theologate. Fr Evans had extended an invitation to dinner to the missionary prelates and some dignitaries of the Irish province. For a breezy report on the function we turn to the journalist, Mr Dan O'Sullivan, who was writing his account for an internal audience:

At 3 pm Dinner was served to the Missionary prelates Dr O'Gorman and Dr Neville; Monsig Shanahan, Fr Provincial, Fr Downey and a few other men of weight in the province who were invited to do honour to the occasion. Mr Heerey (Charlie i.e.) and Joe Horgan, who were servers at the dinner, informed us that the quality and quantity and variety of the viands left nothing to be desired. We are happy to record that, in accordance with an honourable tradition, cold water was the one and only beverage.

Again, following another honourable tradition, the journalist does not afford us any crumbs of conversation gathered from that get-together.

Back again to St Mary's; the journalist there when recording the comings and goings of the various members of the staff and visitors, notes that Fr Shanahan left on the 12th October. We take it for granted that he went back to St Vincent's Hospital for further checks with a view to possible surgery. It was at St Vincent's on the 15th that he had his meeting with the commission of Sisters of Charity who were deputed to examine his project for Nigeria and report back to the Superior General. They had already studied his memorandum and listened carefully to his oral restatement of the main points, before grilling him with a series of searching questions about the practicalities of a project which was obviously near to his heart but which posed serious problems for them. As this was not a case of being asked to start just an extra work in the home situation which would be fairly familiar to them but a totally new-style undertaking in a far-distant country with so many uncertainties involved, the superiors felt that they had a grave responsibility to their society and to its members not to embark on such a challenging undertaking without first having carefully weighed up all the foreseeable consequences.

A summary of what transpired at that meeting between Shanahan and the group of Sisters makes it clear that the main sticking-point then was the question of the maintenance of the Sisters once they were at work in Nigeria. They did not want to be in a position where they would be depending on the charity of the diocese or the

clergy. It was the tradition in their society to be materially independent and, though they felt sure they could rely always on the support of the Holy Ghost Fathers themselves, they mentioned the crux that might arrive if the particular territory were to be handed over to others. They also saw difficulties in having to provide certified teachers for schools coming under government inspection. Shanahan disposed of this last objection by pointing out that the bulk of their apostolate would be outside the classroom.

The lack of available personnel was to be seen as a more serious problem, and it was pointed out in the report sent to the Mother General that the Sisters who had already volunteered were by no means the most suitable to be entrusted with a pioneering mission. Shanahan expressed his appreciation of the serious consideration they were giving to these difficulties at this stage, rather than saying "Yes" now and discovering the problems later. He added that he would be ready to accept with equanimity the outcome of their deliberations whether it was for acceptance or rejection of his proposals.

In the event, the reply sent to Shanahan, 24 October, was in the negative. It has been suggested that one of the deciding factors in this decision was the lack of a suitable leader available to take charge of this new and particularly challenging foundation. The most obvious candidate was Mother Joseph Vavasour. She was deeply committed to the cause of the missions, and was known to be capable, highly intelligent, well educated, of excellent pedigree, being of a well-known old English family who had suffered for their loyalty to the faith. She was also possessed of a deeply religious outlook on life. But in spite of all these valuable qualities she was felt to lack the common touch and the affability which would be necessary to unite and inspire her co-workers in a new and possibly very demanding foundation.¹¹ She was a close confidante of Shanahan and in spite of this negative response by her society she would keep up her supportive contact with the foreign mission movement in general and with Fr Shanahan in particular. We shall have occasion to witness that later.

Shanahan allowed two weeks to elapse before he gave his written reply to Mother Agnes Joseph, who had written to him on behalf of Mother General. Naturally he was disappointed because of what he felt the mission was to lose, but his faith in the overall guidance of the Holy Spirit in the work of realising the Kingdom prevented him from entertaining any feelings of despair or recrimination. What he wrote was, as always, guided by his respect for the facts of the situation and by his deep faith:

I have to thank you for your kind letter of 24th October in which you tell me that the Rev Mother General regrets that she is unable, at the present time, to accept my invitation to send Sisters to Nigeria to help in the evangelisation of the poor pagans. Were the difficulties referred to in your letter not so serious I feel quite certain Rev Mother General would heartily come to the assistance of thousands of African children, girls and women sorely in need of assistance which Sisters alone can give. I shall never forget the burning apostolic zeal of these Sisters of Charity whom it has been my privilege to meet. How intensely they desire to bear their share of the burden and heat of God's work in the Foreign Mission field! And, withal, how resigned they are to God's holy will made known to them through the voice of their superior. May the Holy Ghost ever keep burning in their hearts the missionary spirit, one of the most sanctifying and consoling of his many beautiful gifts...¹²

In spite of this disappointing experience there were to be some clear indications in 1919 that the Spirit was again moving over the waters in Ireland in the area of a renewed interest in the church's mission to what we now call The Third World. Those who have taken a legitimate pride in Ireland's contribution to the Third World in more recent times, and in particular its support for missionaries, may find it difficult to realise how little enthusiasm there was for such causes at the beginning of the twentieth century. Those who had the faith in France had wakened up early in the nineteenth century to the realisation that they had a duty to help in spreading the faith outside their own country. Not merely did missionaries set out for far away countries to evangelise the indigenous population, but the faithful at home gave what support they could, spiritual and material.

When Père Jules Leman CSSp came to Ireland from France in 1859 in search of vocations for the foreign missions, he was surprised to find little interest in this vocation among the laity and he received little encouragement from the parish clergy. In 1866 Leman approached Cardinal Cullen for permission to circulate a brochure among the public informing of the work being done for the foreign missions, especially in Africa, and soliciting their help mainly by prayer. In the following year some 8,000 of these leaflets were circulated, mostly through the good offices of convents with which they had been in contact. A few years later he sent a circular to priests and teachers looking for vocations to the priesthood and brotherhood in the Congregation for service in the missions. There were far more responses from teachers than from the clergy, which was the reverse of what he had experienced in France. The cause of the missions was still seen as something depending on religious societies founded for that purpose and not for the diocesan clergy. So it was to be an uphill struggle to enlist popular support.

With the launching of the *Irish Catholic* in 1889, Fr Ebenrecht, the bursar at Blackrock College, who had for years tried to help missionaries from his slender resources, tried to reach a wider public through his articles on the foreign missions and the campaign he launched for collecting used stamps to raise funds for missionaries. He met with some success, but it was still a matter of scraping at the surface. This work had still a foreign flavour and had not taken any deep roots in the Irish Catholic consciousness.

The 1914-18 War broke many moulds in the religious as well as in the secular world. Horizons had broadened and communications had improved. The 1916 Rising, though it had failed in its military and political objectives, triggered off new attitudes about Ireland's role in the new world order which was unfolding gradually. There was the beginning of a new spiritual identity. But there could be no effective response to the call for Irish personnel to fill the voids left in mission lands by the war until the national seminary in Maynooth was oriented in that direction, and there would be no nation-wide support to back up missionaries until the Irish bishops and the diocesan clergy were influenced to throw their weight in support of the foreign missions cause. There were several events then happening that were to create a new climate in this area.

Bishop John T Murphy CSSp, as he prepared to set out for his missionary diocese in Mauritius, was asked to conduct the annual retreat for students and staff in Maynooth in 1916. In the course of that retreat he gave a conference on the foreign missions and made the remark that in the not-too-distant future Maynooth would be approached to sponsor volunteers from among its newly ordained priests to work on the missions. These remarks helped to confirm the intentions of some who were already contemplating giving their services for the missions. This was a challenging venture at that time, but the next two years saw a quiet revolution taking shape with

the formation by Fr John Blowick and his companions of the Maynooth Mission to China, significantly called after a great Irish missionary, St Columbanus. That was already in 1918. The following year was to see further developments involving all those engaged in the work of the foreign missions.

The Senior Scholasticate journal in St Mary's has this brief but pregnant entry for 1 July 1919: "Fr Director (Fr Edward Leen, that is) was at a congress held in Dalgan Park on Tuesday last." We are not told what transpired at that conference at the house of the Columban Fathers, then located at Dalgan near Shrue in Co Galway, but it was a straw in the wind that the Spirit was blowing.

Switching to the journal being kept at Kimmage by the Theology students we find this historic piece of information for 22 October:

Fr Director (Fr Kearney, that is,) read for us an extract from the account of the General Meeting of the Irish Bishops at Maynooth to the effect that, in accordance with the suggestion of the Holy Father, they were establishing a branch of the Missionary League already founded among the clergy of other countries. Dr O'Gorman and Monsig. Shanahan were invited to the conference at which this important step was decided on.

So at last matters were beginning to move with the help of some prodding from the Holy Father. This Missionary League for priests, the *Pia Unio Cleri* as it was to be known, had originated in Italy after the war and was given Pontifical status in 1918 when it was recommended to bishops throughout the world as one means of furthering the cause of the missions at diocesan level.

Under this gentle pressure from Rome the Irish bishops, gathering for their annual October conference, naturally turned to the men working in the mission field and extended an invitation to them to attend the meeting where this new venture was being launched. That Bishop O'Gorman was invited is not surprising, but it must have been somewhat unusual for one not yet ordained a bishop to be given this distinction. Monsignor Shanahan, to give him his proper title as Prefect Apostolic, was of course the head of one of the most rapidly developing missions at that time, and one that had some title to be looked on as an Irish mission, but perhaps Shanahan owed his invitation on this occasion more to the fact that he was personally well known to some of the bishops, Dr McRory in particular, and he was very close to many of the Maynooth staff including the president, Monsig. James McCaffrey, and Fr Malachy Eaton. He was indebted to his sister, Mrs Dawson, for his introduction to the staff and students of Maynooth College because of their frequent visits to the garage run by the Dawsons as well as availing of their taxi service.

Monsig McCaffrey, having struck up a warm friendship with Shanahan, took a special interest in his mission and his efforts to win the necessary support for their efforts to bring the Gospel to the teeming millions there. He was made well aware of the dire need for priests and was fully supportive of Shanahan's hopes of attracting some of the young priests ordained at Maynooth who would be obliged to apply for work in some foreign diocese before they would qualify for a vacancy in Ireland. There was a surfeit of vocations in Ireland at that moment. Encouraged by the generous response to the recent appeal for volunteers for the mission to China, Shanahan felt that he was within his rights to make a direct appeal to the Irish church for priests to be allowed to serve in Nigeria, at least on a temporary basis. To achieve this objective he would have to secure the support of the Irish bishops. Monsig. McCaffrey provided him with a golden opportunity to launch such an appeal to the assembled bishops. He arranged that Fr Shanahan would be seated alongside Cardinal Logue at the dinner given for the bishops and the visitors at the close of the

October conference. This is how Shanahan himself recalled that occasion in later years:

I became very friendly with the President of Maynooth and discussed with him my scheme for getting out secular priests to Nigeria. He was a great missionary. One day he said to me: 'Next week there will be a dinner here for all the Bishops of Ireland and the Cardinal (Logue) himself will be at it. You come, and I shall put you beside the Cardinal so that you can get him interested in your plan. But whatever you do, take a pinch of snuff if he asks you, and sneeze as hard as you can!' Well, I came to the dinner and was put beside the Cardinal. The meal progressed, but no opportunity arose of talking about Africa for a long time. However, he turned to me at last and said: 'Where are you from Father?' 'Nigeria', I said. 'Hot spot', he said. 'How long were you there?' I told him, and then immediately he said, 'By the way, do you snuff?' 'I do, of course,' I replied. Thereupon he produced the box, and I took a huge pinch which I snuffed as hard as I could and sneezed and sneezed till the tears ran down my cheeks. The Cardinal chuckled and said, 'Great stuff, it has the power of giving a hardened missionary a good shaking up'. After that we got talking, and I unfolded my scheme. I offered to give any young priest who would volunteer to come back with me a three years' University course in the Apostolate, and to send him back to his diocese better for the schooling. 'Why not make it five years?' said the Cardinal, and rising he called for silence. He introduced me to the assembled bishops, and told them I had something to say to them. Here was my chance, and standing up I faced all the Bishops of Ireland, and spoke as I never spoke before or since. When I had finished they agreed with my proposal, and gave me permission to meet all the Maynooth students and to seek volunteers among them. Afterwards, when I told the Holy Father of this incident, he was deeply touched and declared that such generosity had not been heard of for a long time in the Church, and that this was a unique offer and one worthy of the missionary successors of St Patrick.¹³ Shanahan had now achieved what

he had dearly wanted, namely to be allowed to address the students of Maynooth, setting before them the needs of the mission and the nature of the request he was making with the full approval of their bishops. He would have to wait for a suitable opportunity to be arranged by Monsig. McCaffrey for this address to the students. In the meantime we catch glimpses of him from the pages of the journals kept by the students at St Mary's and Kimmage, mostly again matters of comings and goings and saying their early mass from time to time.

Occasionally there is a significant entry where we are left to read between the lines for further information. For 18 October 1919, Feast of St Luke, we have this brief statement: "Fr Shanahan said our mass. A meeting attended by Bishops O'Gorman and Neville, Fr Shanahan and Fr Blowick, President of the Chinese Missionary College, Dalgan Park." Again there is no hint as to what was discussed. There was much to exchange in the matter of ideas about how to conduct promotion work for their various missions without getting in one another's way. The new Missionary League for Priests had to be planned, as responsibility for promoting it had been passed on to Fr Blowick's organisation. The production of their respective missionary magazines, the *Far East* and the *Missionary Annals* must have faced similar problems and one notes that an article by Fr Edward Leen entitled 'Ireland's Destiny' was published in the *Far East* soon after he had contributed his article on Nigeria in the first issue of the *Missionary Annals*. Incidentally, Fr Leen seems to

have undertaken too much work at this period, acting as director, professor, pursuing a postgraduate course at UCD etc. On medical advice he was forced to resign his post as director for the moment and to take a prolonged break from his intellectual pursuits.

From the journals we learn that there were contacts also with the S.M.A. Fathers who had not merely been for many years involved in Ireland and the African missions but were very close neighbours to Shanahan in Nigeria. Relations were very cordial between the two missionary societies in Nigeria. Just then Bishop Broderick SMA was about to perform the first-ever ordination in Nigeria for Shanahan's territory, namely that of Joe Delaney, who had gone to Nigeria as a simple catechist and had given heroic services to the church there, performing many roles.

There are a number of references in the journals kept by the students at this period to 'conferences' or talks given them by Bishop O'Gorman in St Mary's. The one given on 23 October is introduced as follows: "Bishop O'Gorman gave a conference on the Apostolic Spirit that prevailed in the country at present. He ventured to say that the West Coast of Africa would in the next twenty years or so be either Christian or Mahomedan." One gets the feel from these journal jottings that the students and those addressing them were conscious that they were living in a time of climactic change as regards the missionary movement. That was soon to be confirmed by the issuing of the Apostolic Letter '*Maximum Illud*' by Pope Benedict XV - a document that has been variously described as the '*Magna Carta*' of missiology, and something that created 'an impression of a thunder clap in a calm sky'. It was one of the many signs that the Spirit was moving over the waters to inflame apostles once again with fire to spread the Kingdom.

The fact that Bishops O'Gorman and Neville and Fr Gogarty, future missionary bishop, are mentioned on a number of occasions as having given talks and slide-shows to the students about the missions whereas Fr Shanahan is conspicuous by his absence, is at first sight puzzling. At this stage he was in fact far from being well and was forced to return to hospital in mid-November. The first indication we are given of the seriousness of his illness is when the journalist at St Mary's has this entry for 20 November 1919: "Fr Leen is at home ill. Fr Heerey (Patrick, that is, who replaced him as director of the scholasticate) announced that Monsig. Shanahan underwent a very successful operation today in one of the city hospitals; he also asked for prayers that the after-effects may be equally successful".

The first reference to Monsig Shanahan having been released from hospital is in the journal at St Mary's where we find this entry for 5 January 1920, the Eve of the Epiphany: "Football match. Frs Shanahan, Provincial, Evans, Kearney, Botrel and Schmidt from Rockwell, here for dinner. Soirée." This may well have been a reunion to celebrate Shanahan's return in good health. The Kimmage journal informs us for 10 January that Fr Shanahan had arrived there and was expected to stay for a week 'for the good of his health'. He had been invited by the Superior, Fr Evans, who had known him well since his time in Rockwell as prefect and Dean of discipline.

Shanahan was invited back to St Mary's on 16 January, Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Refuge of Sinners otherwise known as Our Lady of Victories. He was joined by Bishops O'Gorman and Neville. During the celebrations a wire arrived from the shipping company in Liverpool announcing that the boat for Freetown was due to sail in a day or two. The journalist penned these comments after the hasty departure of Dr O'Gorman:

So Bishop O'Gorman took his departure this evening for the Dark

Continent again. So sudden that we had not time to give him a worthy send off as we would have liked. He has been with us practically all the time since he came to Ireland, so we will miss his pleasant company. God grant him a safe and pleasant journey to his destination and preserve him for many years' work on the mission.

This prayer for the safe return of Bishop O'Gorman to his mission was no doubt uttered lightly as a matter of course as with the end of the Great War in 1918 the high seas were no longer seen to pose any great hazard to ocean-going craft. Unknown to them at that moment a major catastrophe had happened at sea a few days earlier involving a large group of missionaries going from France to West Africa, most of them members of the Holy Ghost Congregation. Fr Shanahan had returned to Kimmage to continue his convalescence there when the news filtered through as an unconfirmed report from the press. Then, on 18 January, the journalist, Charlie Heerey, made this entry: "This morning (Sunday) Monsig. Shanahan received official confirmation of the report we heard on Friday that Mgr Jalabert and 9 Fathers and 6 Brothers have gone down in *L'Afrique* on their way to their respective missions. May they rest in peace!"

This was particularly painful news for Shanahan. He realised, of course, the great loss that would be suffered by the French missions which were already so depleted in personnel as a result of the war; but having spent eleven years in France and having known many of them personally he would have identified closely with the victims of the tragedy and with their confreres. The death of Mgr Hyacinthe Jalabert, in particular, would have been felt with special personal grief having had memories of him at the director in the juniorate at Cellule. The journalist adds; "We are all offering the prescribed suffrages for the repose of their souls." It was arranged that a public mass would be offered for the victims of the tragedy on Thursday 22 January 1920. The venue chosen was Blackrock because of the greater facilities to cater for the expected numbers. The principal celebrant on that occasion was naturally Bishop Neville, the Deacon was Fr Paddy Heerey, the Director of the scholasticate, and the Subdeacon was the young priest, Fr Denis Joy, who was due to travel with Bishop O'Gorman to Sierra Leone but, because of the suddenness of the departure announcement he literally "missed the boat" for that occasion. The journalist added this note: "Fr Joy is the first priest who has finished in the Irish province to sail to Africa. Good wishes to all; he leaves 26th."

When someone wrote to Shanahan from Nigeria to tell him that the Africans had organised a collection to have three High Masses offered for the repose of the souls of the missionaries he was very moved by the significance of this gesture. In a letter to Paris he pointed out that this gesture in solidarity with missionaries not connected with Nigeria gave the lie to the unfounded charge sometimes made that the Blacks had no heart and no gratitude. "Here we have a practical rebuttal on this very unjust accusation" he concluded.¹⁴

During his rather prolonged stay in Kimmage, Fr Shanahan gave much of his attention to the Theologians, not by way of formal 'conferences' but in joining them for relaxed fireside chats. The journal kept by the students has several references to these homely encounters. For Monday 19 January 1920 we read: "Monsig. Shanahan amongst us for the recreation after tea and gave us a good insight into the 'humours' of missionary life." For Tuesday the entry reads; "Mons. Shanahan enlivened our recreation once more at 10.30 am." For Friday, the day following the Pontifical requiem at Blackrock, we read: "After tea Mons. Shanahan came for a chat with us. We sat around the study fire and so interesting was his description of missionary life

that we were not satisfied at the end of the time allotted for recreation and conference; so the auxiliary asked for permission and we remained till night prayer." Again for the 25th we have this entry: "Mons. Shanahan came with us again for the recreation after tea and gave us a great deal of useful information about the missions. It was 9 p.m. when he left us and even then we wanted him to stay on." So it was a clear case of "Were not our hearts burning within us" as they heard him speak of the missionary apostolate.

Our final quotation from the records of this stay of Shanahan in Kimmage is quoted from the Students' Diary published as a serial in the *Missionary Annals*. Our extract is taken from the February edition 1920:

We're having a great time with Monsig. Shanahan. He often comes to spend an evening with us, and we have a real missionary talk. Monsig. is bombarded with questions; he answers as he can; he narrates his experiences in Africa; he tells stories of every description, comic, tragic, pathetic – and so time flies. Late that night we sat chatting round the fire listening to the account of his famous 'trek' to the Cameroon. Everyone was so engrossed that even the Regulator forgot to ring the bell at the end of Recreation, so that – *O proh dolor* – the hour of study time had gone before anyone noticed the omission..

As yet Shanahan had not managed to arrange for his address to the students at Maynooth. That opportunity presented itself in mid-February. We learn of the outcome from a letter written by Shanahan himself 22 February 1920 to Mgr Le Roy. Here is what he says about that encounter:

On Monday and Tuesday of last week I gave two conferences lasting an hour each to the students of the national seminary in Maynooth. These were supplemented by another conference given by Fr Thady O'Connor using his slide projector. We were listened to with the greatest attention. And the President (Monsignor McCaffrey) made an enthusiastic appeal to the students to accompany us when we went back again for our distant mission. He gave high praise to our Congregation for which he expressed the greatest sympathy on account of the recent disaster of the *Afrique*.¹⁵

For a reaction from among the students we quote from an entry made by Patrick Whitney, the future founder of St Patrick's Missionary Society:

Fr Shanahan pleaded for Africa – Nigeria. He will give a temporary mission there for priests from Maynooth. There is immense work to be done and the pagans are asking for baptism. The appeal went to my heart. If I can go – God direct me. If I don't go there, Garret Pierce is asking for men in Minnesota. By Patrick's Day it will be decided. St Patrick pray for me.¹⁶

St Patrick's answer to that particular prayer was that Whitney not merely went to Africa himself but he was to found a society for diocesan priests volunteering for service in Africa, and that society was to be named after the National Apostle himself.

That opportunity to address the students of Maynooth College was of special importance to Shanahan. He knew that there was little hope of getting from the Irish senior scholasticate the extra personnel he needed so badly. Numbers had been drastically depleted there as a result of the contract made by the Provincial Fr John T Murphy to send some twenty senior students to complete their studies in the USA to serve in the new parishes being set up for coloured people. This was part of the deal with Mother Katharine Drexel in order to obtain the badly needed funds to extend and maintain the senior scholasticate set up in Ireland in 1911.¹⁷ Shanahan

knew that he would have to be content with a mere trickle of young priests for years to come as other missions and the home works would have to get their share. The last of the covenanted students, Frank Nolan, left for the senior scholasticate at Ferendale in the USA in autumn 1919. While awaiting his departure date, Frank designed the cover for the first issues of the *Missionary Annals*.

Shortly after his address at Maynooth, Shanahan decided to set off for France. Though the French province had suffered a cruel blow in the loss of 16 of its missionary personnel in the *Afrique* disaster he still had hopes that the French confreres on holidays from Nigeria would be allowed to return there. There were also changes being planned by Rome regarding the actual frontiers of the Southern Nigeria Mission that interested him. As both Bishop Neville and Fr Shanahan had missed out for the General Chapter they were still due to make their official visit to the Superior General, so they set out together for Paris on 2 March 1920.

Shanahan was to spend six weeks in France. He had much to discuss about his own mission in Nigeria and about the Cameroon on which he was able to report in detail as a result of his extraordinary ministry there at the request of the Holy See.

A major decision was then about to be taken at Rome about Southern Nigeria itself. At last it was planned to upgrade its status from being a mere Prefecture Apostolic to being a Vicariate with a resident bishop at its head. Names would have to be submitted to Rome by the Superior General for this new office and as the territory had been committed to the pastoral care of the Holy Ghost Congregation the new bishop would normally be a member of the Congregation. The most obvious candidate would be Shanahan himself, but only Rome could have the final word on that.

One big problem area where Shanahan hoped for help was in the matter of securing missionary Sisters. The departure of the last of the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny from Nigeria was reported to Paris by Fr Louis Ward as follows:

Rev Mother and Sr Clement are very ill for the past two months. The Doctor says it is better that they go home as soon as possible. I hope the sisters will return after a year's rest. We have far too much to do without having to carry on the work of the convent. All the boarders have been placed in houses belonging to our Christian women... Would the Mother House approve my new title "Rev. Mother Superior" as I am in charge of the convent...¹⁸

Shanahan's failure to secure replacements from the Irish Sisters of Charity made him look once more to French sources. What was needed was help from a society specially dedicated to work on the mission rather than try to influence those whose vocation lay elsewhere to take on what would be considered by them an extraordinary apostolate. Just then Marie-Eugénie Caps was trying to launch such a French missionary society of sisters with the help of some Spiritans and within a short time.

Mgr Le Roy got involved in expediting the approval by Rome of this society, which was to be known as the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ But this was still in the future and Shanahan wanted missionary sisters right now, preferably English-speaking Sisters. Just then he was informed about the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary founded in 1877 in Rome with strong Irish connections in recent years. Having got the required permission from the Superior General to issue an invitation to these Sisters to come out to Nigeria he set about drafting a carefully worded letter to be sent to the Mother General in Rome.

A typed French version of this letter written on 18 March 1920 was kept in the General Archives in rue Lhomond and from it we see Shanahan's careful attention to detail as he gave an upbeat account of the mission while stressing the needs that only

missionary Sisters with a knowledge of English could supply. Having given the necessary brief historical and geographical details to put the Nigerian mission clearly in the picture he gives the statistics that he knew by heart having supplied them to Rome, to mission aid societies etc. namely, 25 missionaries, 600 catechists, 15,000 Catholics, 1,000 Christian families, 25,000 children attending 436 mission schools. The big lacuna was that they had none to look after the very small children, the girl students, the Christian womenfolk. Referring to the good work done by the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny he pointed out that the numbers supplied over the last twelve years amounted to five, only three of whom remained on after the war. There was no one to relieve them and worn out from many years continuous service they had been recalled recently leaving only the Protestant ladies of Calabar to take over their type of work. The convent, the chapel and school buildings were still in perfect order but some 300/400 girls without teachers. A depressing situation indeed but the news that the Franciscan Missionaries had novitiates full of aspirants, many from England and Ireland, filled his heart with new hope. He then went into specifics as to the number of sisters required - six for a start - their duties, their upkeep, the availability of good food, medical facilities etc. A useful letter indeed for the historian of that period but for Shanahan a burning apostolic situation to be remedied at the moment.²⁰

While revolving such matters in his mind in Paris Fr Shanahan received a letter from one of the Irish Sisters of Charity in Merrion - most probably Mother Joseph Vavasour who had come up with another of her original proposals in favour of the foreign missions. This time Shanahan was not impressed. He was being asked to go on a pilgrimage to Lisieux in Normandy to the grave of a Carmelite Sister who had died in 1897 at the age of 24 years, and to bring all his problems about the missions to her! This Carmelite - Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus - had promised that she would spend her eternity 'showering roses' on those who asked for her intercession, and already by 1920 she had acquired the reputation of being a miracle-worker in earnest. This was the belief among her most unlikely 'fans' - namely, the French soldiers who had endured the dehumanising burdens of life in the trenches. Among these was one Père Daniel Brottier CSSp who had been forced to return to France from the missions in Senegal where he had been valued as his right-hand man by Mgr Jalabert, well known to Shanahan. Père Brottier had volunteered to act as military chaplain and all during the war Mgr Jalabert had prayed to Sister Thérèse to protect him for the great work he had planned for him when peace was restored. In 1919, when Mgr Jalabert was in France for the General Chapter he assured Père Brottier that he owed his protection to Sr Thérèse to whom Jalabert had prayed each day for his safe keeping in the trenches. Brottier was so convinced of this special protection that he dedicated his new work for the orphans at Auteuil to the protection of St Thérèse with miraculous results.

Shanahan, however, had no such confidence in this little Carmelite nun nor did he have any reason to have. And then what would she know about the missions, never having left her enclosed convent? He let Mother Vavasour know his reactions to her proposal about that unorthodox pilgrimage, thinking that that would be the last he would hear about the subject. Her hard-hitting reply with hints of incurring the displeasure of heaven made him take an early train for Lisieux accompanied by another unconvinced missionary - Fr Jules Douvry, who was home on sick leave from Nigeria. They sought out Thérèse's grave to say a few perfunctory prayers as they thought. In later years Shanahan described their experience as follows:

I shall never forget to my dying day the impression both of us got at the grave. We felt we were in a supernatural atmosphere, surely in the presence of

something strange. We prayed there for a while, and it was while there I realised for the first time how this little girl, who had never left her convent, was nevertheless a great missionary and an exceptional friend of missionaries in pagan lands. I asked her to place the cause of Nigeria before Our Lord.²¹

On another occasion he amplified this incident, having seen it as of special significance in his understanding of the missionary apostolate:

There seemed to be no prospect of getting either missionary Priests or Sisters

in Ireland. Early in 1920 I went over to France hoping to get them but all in vain. While I was in Paris I received a letter from a very pious and zealous Sister in Ireland in which she advised me to go to the tomb of the Little Flower in Lisieux.

Much against my own wishes and with little confidence – I am sorry to say – I went to Lisieux, and remained there three days. During that time I went frequently to pray at the grave of the little missionary saint. While there, I realised for the first time how this little girl, who had never left her convent, was nevertheless a great missionary and an exceptional friend of missionaries in pagan lands. I asked her to place the case of Nigeria before Our Lord.

He amplified the story of Lisieux later on in a talk which was taken down verbatim by a Killeshandra missionary nun, now dead:

"One day" he said "I got a letter from a great friend of mine, a Sister of Charity in Merrion. She told me that I should go to Lisieux while I was waiting, and there mention my requests at the grave of a young nun who had died a very holy death and who had been granting extraordinary favours to those who made their petitions through her. This friend of mine knew of my anxiety to get nuns and priests for Nigeria and meant me to ask this young nun of Lisieux to obtain them for me. We had heard of the holy life led by the young Carmelite whose grave my friend wished me to visit, and as I liked to do what she told me I suggested the visit to one of the other priests who was with me. 'Go to Lisieux indeed!' he said, 'What would people say if they saw two hardened old missioners like us going off on a pilgrimage to a convent where some little nun with a lovely face died. Go to Lisieux! Aren't there plenty of saints to pray to where we are?' 'Go to Lisieux indeed!' I echoed, 'What would we go to Lisieux for?' and I wrote to my friend in Merrion putting to her the same arguments as my friend in Paris had made. Well, I got back a letter – such a letter! – telling me that I had better delay no longer but go at once and make reparation for the things I had dared to say about someone whom God had evidently destined to become a saint etc, etc. I took the letter to my friend and said I had decided to go to Lisieux, and he had better come too in case there was anything in it at all and we might suffer afterwards for our folly. Neither of us was very enthusiastic, and, lest anyone might know, we were doing such a foolish thing, we got the earliest train we could without saying a word to anyone. Well, we arrived at Lisieux and went straight to the public cemetery. There sure enough we saw a grave decorated with little medals and we guessed rightly that it was the grave of the Little Flower. I shall never forget to my dying day the impression both of us got at the grave. We felt we were in a very supernatural atmosphere – surely in the presence of something strange. We prayed there for a while and, when we left, I suggested that we go to the Convent, ask to see her living Sisters and tell them of how disrespectfully we had spoken of their little Sister.

My friend was wild and said that would be the surest way of letting the whole

world know we had been there as the nuns would write the news here, there and everywhere immediately we left them. However, I was to make due reparation and we went to the Carmelite Convent. There we spoke to the four sisters of the young nun at whose grave we had been praying and I insisted on telling them all that we had said. They just laughed and laughed. I told them of my longing to get nuns and priests for Nigeria and they told me of their little Sister's love for the missions. When I got back to Paris I had a lovely letter from one of them and in it she said I am sure my little Sister will obtain your requests. And how marvelously she has obtained them.”²²

They visited the Convent where they met Thérèse's three sisters who convinced them that their prayer for missionary helpers would be answered by their sister. The three days spent on this pilgrimage to Lisieux were to have a deep and lasting effect on Shanahan. His contact with the young Carmelite's milieu and her apostolic outlook affected his own approach to the missionary apostolate. Till then he had been so preoccupied with seeking personnel for active work on the mission that he had overlooked somewhat the contribution that could be made by the general faithful who were never to put a foot on mission territory. The supportive power of prayer in preparing the pagan world for the coming of the Kingdom was henceforth to be a constant theme for him, and from then on he was known to address his audiences as 'My fellow missionaries'. This was done, not as a mere formality but out of deep conviction. And by coincidence that was one of the lessons underlined by Pope Benedict XV in the Apostolic Letter *Maximum illud* launched 30 November 1919. Another message stressed by Benedict XV, this time for heads of missions, was their duty to make it a priority to foster vocations among the peoples they were evangelising.

Some time would have to elapse before the climate was ripe for the spontaneous growth of such vocations, but Shanahan himself had already been preoccupied with this aspect of the apostolate. He had arranged in 1914 that two promising young Igbo students, one being John Anyogu, future Bishop of Enugu, be accepted at the juniorate of the English province at Castlehead, Lancashire. It was to Castlehead that Shanahan was now heading. That little community had a special links with Nigeria. Frs Patrick McDermott and Joseph Lichtenberger, when home from Nigeria, had helped in the early days to get the school and the Brothers' novitiate underway. It was from there that Joe Delaney had come to Nigeria to begin his valuable work as catechist.

As Shanahan was leaving for England he received a letter from a young secular priest in Dublin volunteering for his mission in Nigeria. This young priest, Fr Tommy Ronayne, had been a student in Rockwell while Shanahan was Dean there. Already the Little Flower was seen to be working miracles in favour of Nigeria as promised.

Castlehead was from then to have a very special personal significance for Shanahan: it was while he was staying there for a few days that the news came through that he had been nominated bishop by the Holy See. There was naturally a very joyous if modest celebration of the news which must have meant much to his two fellow Tipperarymen, Frs John Heelan and Tim Cunningham, who were members of the staff there at the time.

The official announcement of Shanahan's appointment was made in Rome, 12 April 1920 and on the same day two other members of the Congregation were appointed Vicars Apostolic, namely Mgr Raymond-René Lerouge for French Guinea and Mgr Louis Le Hunsec for Senegal in succession to Mgr Jalabert.

From the scholasticate journal at St Mary's, Rathmines, we learn that the news of Shanahan's appointment was received by the Provincial, Fr Con O'Shea, on 14 April. The students were busily engaged that day preparing an edition of the *Missionary Annals* for the post. So a news scoop had just been missed, but the next issue informs us that there was joy all round at the news of the appointment, and by then the extra good news could be added, namely that Monsig. James McCaffrey, President of Maynooth College, had kindly arranged that the episcopal ordination would take place in Maynooth itself. This item of news was followed by the comment: "How fitting, that it should take place at the Alma Mater of the Catholic Faith".²³

As Shanahan returned to Dublin he took with him John Anyogu, one of the two students he had sent to the junior seminary in Castlehead. He wanted him to spend a few weeks in Dublin before returning to Nigeria to do his senior studies under the direction of Fr Geoffrey O'Sullivan who had taken over from Fr Thady O'Connor in conducting the Training College for teacher-catechists. John was to be the first Igbo to be ordained priest and was later to be Bishop of Enugu.

The best news for Shanahan as he arrived back in Dublin was that a priest of the Dublin diocese, Fr Thomas Ronayne, and Patrick Whitney, soon to be ordained, had clearly signified their intentions of joining him for work in Nigeria. And Whitney, who had previously confided his destiny to the care of St Patrick, now attributed his clearance to be allowed to opt for Nigeria to the intercession of Sister Thérèse! His bishop and his mother had given their consent to his decision. Writing on 25 April 1920 to Paris Fr Louis Lena his former colleague in Nigeria, Shanahan remarked:

You will be pleased to hear that the best student in Maynooth College is to come out with me to Nigeria. I consider this one of the most important events that has occurred for many years in favour of the African missions in the British colonies.²⁴

Fr Tommy Ronayne's clearance to be able to offer his services for Nigeria must have been particularly pleasing to Shanahan: he had known him as a young student in Rockwell where he was a contemporary of Fr Thady O'Connor and Fr Edward Leen. Tommy had already expressed his purpose to go on the missions to join Fr Shanahan but when he was declared delicate by the medical attendant in Rockwell in 1903 he felt that this had put paid for ever to his missionary ambitions. His transfer to the boarding school at Blackrock as from then was part of his parents' plans to make sure that he gave up completely the idea of being a missionary. He later opted for the Dublin diocese and did his theology at Maynooth College. The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr William Walsh, gave him leave of absence to serve for one year in the diocese of Sioux City, USA. When he returned to Dublin in 1916 he was soon involved in the launch of the Maynooth Mission to China with Fr John Blowick, who had been his classmate in Maynooth as well as having links with the diocese of Tuam. Dr Walsh, however, would not allow Fr Tommy to join the Maynooth Mission himself, no doubt because that involved a permanent commitment. He posed no objection in 1920 however when Fr Tommy requested permission for a temporary leave of absence to serve with Shanahan in Nigeria.²⁵

Fr Ronayne was ever devising new schemes for good purposes. Having learned of Shanahan's vain search for religious Sisters to help educate a Christian womanhood in Nigeria he came up with a novel proposal, namely that a laywoman would volunteer to do the work the Sisters were expected to do. On 29 April he introduced to Shanahan a young woman in his parish at Monkstown who was doing a

midwifery course in Holles Street and would be available to go to Nigeria the following year. The young woman's name was Mary Martin, the future founder of the Medical Missionaries of Mary. Her life story was to be a glorious chapter in the missionary history of Africa and elsewhere.²⁶

Many things had to be planned in preparation for the episcopal ordination in Maynooth College, 6 June 1920. Naturally the Provincialate was chosen by Shanahan as his main centre of operations while contacting the various people to be involved and for being contacted himself by all those offering their congratulations and their assistance. The Philosophers' journal at St Mary's, Rathmines, informs us that he had arrived there by 21 April. For 21st of the month we are told there was a celebration there attended by Shanahan himself and Frs Jules Botrel, Bernard Fennelly of the Kimmage staff, Andrew Sheridan assigned to the Mission Band in USA, and Fr Mulcahy SJ, rector of Clongowes Wood College. Shanahan owed his acquaintance with Clongowes to the fact that his sister's son Michael Dawson was then a student there.

There was a costly side to becoming a bishop. Writing to Fr Lena who had been recently appointed First Assistant Shanahan said:

I am busy getting everything ready for the 6th. The cost will be at least £400 for the outfit alone!! Fr Faugère says the mitre cannot be done in time in Paris.

I am getting it done here. It will be all the same. I am most grateful to you for having obtained the sum of 500 frs for getting it for me.²⁷

Shanahan gave much careful thought to what was to be displayed in his episcopal crest as we can see from the outline of his ideas on the matter that he sent to Paris for approval.²⁸ He saw himself as being part of the great missionary tradition of the Holy Ghost Congregation, especially in Africa, so he felt that the emblem of the Congregation should be displayed at the top of the left, namely the Holy Spirit hovering over the Heart of Mary. But he was also conscious of the missionary exploits of the early Irish monks. Including the shamrock in his crest came more readily to him having spent eleven of the most formative years of his life on mainland Europe where he was reminded at times that he was representing his native country for those around him. But the shamrock represented for him especially St Patrick and his stress on the Blessed Trinity as the kernel of the Christian faith he had come at such sacrifice to impart to the Irish people. No doubt as Shanahan emblazoned the shamrock on his crest he recalled that incident in his early days in Nigeria when in anger he threatened to walk out on his French confreres when they made fun of the withered sprig of shamrock sent by his mother which he had proudly displayed on the Feast of St Patrick. And from then on others automatically associated Shanahan with St Patrick as he seemed, more than any one else, to measure up to the traditional image of the National Apostle. He wrote with regard to the symbol of the shamrock: "It is Ireland which gives the first Vicar Apostolic to Nigeria; it is Ireland that must supply the missionaries to do for Nigeria what St Patrick did for Ireland."

The inclusion of the Magi star arising over the river Niger again had the dual significance of the field of his apostolate and the light of the faith which was to be always the guiding star for himself and the people of Nigeria. He had originally intended including the image of "a missionary in the act of baptising a Nigerian representing the effects of Grace of God which at the moment is producing such great results in Africa." This detail was omitted in the final draft of the crest due to artistic considerations of space.

But it was particularly in the words chosen as his episcopal motto - *Domine ut videam* - (Lord that I may see) that we find the real man revealed. That Shanahan

always strove to have an open mind was so well known that the negative side of this virtue was given as a proof of his weakness! His director in the senior scholasticate in Rockwell had critically written of him: "*Il est des avis des autres*," which was meant in the context to say that he was inclined to be influenced too much by what others said. And again at the end of his missionary career in Nigeria, the French official visitor, Père Soul CSSp, reported that he was prone to change his mind too easily. The positive side of the coin was that Shanahan in his search for God's will knew that he had to listen carefully to what the Lord was saying to him through others as well as looking into his own heart. That he did try to listen to God in his own heart was obvious to those who closely observed his air of recollection as he went about the ordinary affairs of life. The choice of that motto: *Domine ut videam* - Lord that I may see- was to prove prophetic. He had learned to alter his outlook on the apostolate through his introduction to the spirituality of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus. In the not-too-distant future he would be making another pilgrimage to her graveside to beseech the Lord through her intercession for sufficient eyesight to be able to continue his missionary career. His own comment on his choice of biblical phrase is highly significant.

In the Gospel for Quinqagesima is found the narrative of the miracle worked by Our Saviour in favour of the poor blind man who made himself heard in spite of the protestations of the annoyed by his cries - an image of Africa and also of the Christians of Europe who possess Our Saviour themselves and have no great worries about leading to him the blind or the poor pagans who cry out *Jesu, Filii David, miserere mei* - Jesus son of David have mercy on me.²⁹

Once Maynooth had been fixed for the ordination ceremony, delicacy and diplomacy would suggest that the main ordaining prelate should be a member of the Irish hierarchy rather than a member of the Holy Ghost Congregation. That was the approach taken by Fr John T. Murphy CSSp in 1916 when he had been allowed the use of the pro-Cathedral in Dublin for his ordination as bishop of Port Louis in Mauritius. Shanahan's first choice was Cardinal Logue, and Mgr Le Roy, the Superior General, as assistant prelate together with Bishop Neville CSSp. In the event neither McRory nor Le Roy were available for the date chosen. Then Shanahan opted for what was a happy solution namely, two "neighbours' children" from Shanahan's home place, Dr Kelly, bishop of Ross and Dr Miller OMI, former bishop of the Transvaal, together with the Irish Spiritan missionary bishop, Dr Neville CSSp. Though the ceremonies and the singing would naturally be the prerogative of the seminarians at Maynooth it was agreed that it would be appropriate that Fr Tommy Ronayne should be the Master of Ceremonies for the occasion and Rev Patrick Whitney should fill the role of Deacon at the Mass.

As the big day approached Fr Shanahan wrote to the Superior General, Mgr Le Roy: "I offer up for Nigeria all the misery I am suffering as I face that ceremony which is to take place next Sunday. I fear it more than the surgeon's knife..."³⁰

There were some 600 students at Maynooth at the time and they had automatic right to be present at the ceremony. A hundred places were reserved for Shanahan's guests, members of his family and the Holy Ghost Congregation. Most of the members of the three communities in Dublin are reported as having been present. Those most anxious to attend were the senior students at Kimmage and St Mary's but they were informed by the director at Kimmage on 8 May that "Mons. Shanahan, being unable to invite us all to Maynooth for his consecration, had asked for four delegates from the Senior Scholasticate. Hence those who are first in dignity

have the privilege." The same procedure was followed for the philosophy students at St Marys. Because school was still in progress at the time, only two delegates came from Rockwell - one of them being Fr Edward Leen, who had been assigned to Rockwell on a temporary basis while recuperating.

It would appear that Shanahan made another conscious decision to mark his episcopal ordination. One notices that from 1920 on his official name in the *Etat du Personnel* of the Congregation is Mgr Joseph-Marie Shanahan. This change of name could only come from Bishop Shanahan himself. He had always had a special devotion to St Joseph not merely because of he felt indebted to the Confraternity of St Joseph which sponsored his education at Beauvais but also because St Joseph was specially honoured in his own family. Now he seems to have made a deliberate decision to put his new role as bishop under the protection of Mary.

Liturgists today when planning an important ceremony like to allow for an element of surprise. Even if not altogether taken by surprise, the highlight for all present at the Shanahan ceremony was the singing in public for the first time by the students of the special hymn composed for the occasion, the 'Missionary Hymn' as it has become known. It was composed by Fr Jim Burke, CSSp, science teacher at Blackrock, at the suggestion and with help from Fr John Kearney, Director of the Theologate.

Fr Kearney and his junior confrere, Fr Burke, had developed a good team relationship since they attended the College of Science courses together in order to cope with the new science programme for secondary schools. Even when Fr Kearney transferred to Kimmage in 1918 as Director of theology, they kept up their friendship because of their mutual interest in music. They had both co-operated with Fr Pembroke in the successful launch of the *Missionary Annals*. When Fr Pembroke died suddenly after the successful launch of the first issue, Fr Kearney persuaded Fr Burke to compose a fitting 'In Memoriam' hymn in his honour. That hymn, entitled, '*De Profundis*' had been published in a subsequent issue of the *Missionary Annals* and had met with immediate approval. Fr Kearney had since been urging Fr Burke to follow up that successful number with a Missionary anthem, but the muse was rather slow in responding. The prospect of Shanahan's historic ordination at Maynooth College provided the required impetus. It now meant working against time composing, correcting and modifying according to the accepted norms of hymnology at that time. Then there was the process of transcribing the music and having it ready in sufficient numbers for the rehearsals at Maynooth. Just as the earlier hymn had been based on a popular Welsh melody the music of the missionary hymn was based on a melody from Charles Gounod's 'Redemption'. Gounod's work had been produced in 1893 for the first time in Ireland in what is now known as the National Concert Hall. That production had a special interest for some people at Blackrock as the President, Fr Botrel, who had been a pupil of Gounod, had had an interview with the composer in 1892. Fr Burke, who had been a student at Blackrock at the time, was familiar with the melody and the words which he now used to splendid effect in what has since been known as 'The Missionary Hymn'. In fact it is almost certain that part of these words were used by the choir at Shanahan's ordination as priest at Blackrock.³¹

The ordination ceremony at Maynooth went so well in all its details and in the overall effect that the President of the College, Monsig. J. McCaffrey, is reported as having remarked that it was the finest episcopal ordination ceremony he had witnessed in Maynooth. Recalling the occasion years later, Fr Edward Leen wrote: "I remember seeing the Bishop after his consecration, moving down the chapel at

Maynooth, with mitre and crosier...an impression of silent strength, every inch of a Bishop and every inch a man. He was a fine figure and very impressive. He looked like a man who had fought a hard battle, had triumphed, and was being crowned."

A writer in the next issue of the *Missionary Annals* tried to give some impression of the effect of the ceremony on all present and though the language and some of the sentiments seemed dated today one is left in no doubt that all present felt they were assisting at an event with historical significance as a missionary prelate was being hosted in the National Seminary for the first time. We quote an extract from this article:

And the effect of all this was heightened by the splendid singing of the choir, the solemn march of the music, and the grace, ease and perfection with which those who were charged with the ceremonies carried out their task...

Impressive it undoubtedly was – but it was more than impressive. One will scarcely be accused of subjectivism in stating that the whole assembly was thrilled with a strange emotion. The very atmosphere seemed charged and vibrant with enthusiasm: for all felt they looked on a man who was not succeeding to the government of a portion of Christ's empire, long held in peaceful and secure possession by the church, but one who was elected to carry Christ's standard into territories that were to be rescued, by strong force and stern fighting, from the hostile powers of darkness... The newly-anointed stood forth, not merely as a bishop, but as a warrior. The gleaming mitre was the helmet which was to dismay, and the cosier the sword which was to smite Satan and his legions.³²

There is no extant photographic record of the ceremony itself, but afterwards a splendid group photo was taken against the background of the college buildings showing the newly-ordained bishop seated among the little team of close workers who meant so much to him at the time, namely Frs Thomas Ronayne, Thady O'Connor, Bert Wilson, who had been provisionally allocated to Nigeria, and Patrick Whitney, deacon.

From the press accounts we learn of the speeches made at the luncheon given in Maynooth. Among the speakers were Dr Kelly the ordaining prelate, Monsig. McCaffrey, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Larry O'Neill, and finally Bishop Shanahan himself. One notices a common theme - the linking of the modern missionary movement of which Shanahan's ordination was taken as a symbol with the great missionary tradition of Ireland before she became a conquered nation. In the toast to the Pope stress was laid on the great loyalty shown to the Holy See by Ireland down the ages even when it cost, and that was the theme underlined also by the Lord Mayor who had just returned from Rome where he attended the Beatification ceremonies for Blessed (now 'Saint') Oliver Plunkett. There was high praise for the Holy Ghost Congregation, and an expression of sympathy and solidarity with the Congregation in the wake of the *Afrique* tragedy earlier that year. And the hope was expressed that the 17,000, given as the total number of Catholics in Southern Nigeria, would soon be doubled. Shanahan, in acknowledging the compliments to himself, pointed out that he was but a member of a team of missionaries whose dedication was so total that their one ambition was to be found worthy to spend their lives in the service of their adopted people and to die in their midst. These words re-echoed the final prayer of St Patrick as expressed in his Confession. They have also a special relevance to Shanahan's story. His deep wish to be buried among the people he loved in Nigeria seemed at one period not destined to be ever realised, but Providence was to see to it

missionary should be - his work, his dangers and safeguards. It was better than a week's retreat." Finally, the Kimmage journal mentions for 24 June one of Shanahan's first episcopal engagements: "Mgr Shanahan, who left on Monday to confer minor orders in the Maynooth ordinations, paid us a short visit before dinner but he did not remain".

Shanahan's suggestion about the exchange between Fr Edward Leen and Fr Thady O'Connor had been approved by the authorities. When it was made public someone wrote in the journal on hearing of the news "We lose a good professor and a good missionary".

Three young priests pronounced their official consecration to the apostolate in Kimmage at the end of June that year, namely Fr Dan O'Sullivan, who as journalist had recorded Shanahan's frequent visits among them; he was to receive his obedience for Sierra Leone, Fr John McCarthy who was to be posted to Rockwell as director of the juniorate there, and Fr Phil O'Connor who was to accompany Bishop Shanahan to Nigeria where he was destined in his own quiet way to play a very significant role in the years ahead.

Having been busily occupied ever since the ceremony in Maynooth, Dr Shanahan was beginning to feel the strain. He wrote 3 July 1920 to the Superior General:

Sorry for the delay in sending the photos and the Crest. It is so difficult to get anything like that done here in Ireland...I am so tired after the operation, the consecration, all the conferences to be given about Nigeria etc. etc. that I feel I need a few weeks quiet holiday. I am offered such. My family are renting a house in Llandudno in the mountains of Wales and by the sea. If you have no objection...

No reply so far from the Franciscan Missionaries. The seminar on the missions that was to be held at the Columban new house in Navan has been postponed because of transport problems due to the disturbed state of the country. Fr F.X. Lichtenberger has not sent the money collected for the church in Onitsha. What is to be done about it?

Shanahan needed to hear some good news at this stage as he looked anxiously for personnel for his mission and for the necessary funds to pay his five or six hundred catechists. The following day he had some good news to report in his letter to Mgr Le Roy:

With great pleasure I announce that the Franciscan Missionaries have accepted the foundation in Calabar...They asked for a letter for Cardinal Rossum. I have sent it, explaining why the Sisters of St Joseph departed from Nigeria and the necessity for Sisters to take up the work they abandoned. Now all my wishes are realised. We have missionary priests and sisters.³⁵

As Shanahan was by then counting his men - and women - he was also literally counting his costs. Some of his thoughts and reactions at this juncture are left on record for us in a letter he addressed to Fr Ronayne 13 July 1920 and which was published by the editor of the *Missionary Annals* as part of his effort to raise the necessary funds.

My Dear Fr Ronayne - We are sailing in September or October, provided berths can be secured in the overcrowded Elder Dempster steamers. We shall be sixteen in all: four priests who are sailing for the first time - yourself, Fr Leen, Fr Whitney (lately ordained at Maynooth) and Fr Phil O'Connor.

You will be accompanied by six pioneer Sisters of the grand Order of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. The contingent will be completed by six

old Nigerians, who, like myself, are returning to their mission after a much-needed holiday.

Sixteen missionaries for Nigeria! Never in the history of Africa did so many set out together for the same mission field. must find sixteen hundred pounds to pay the passage money and purchase the tropical outfit for these sixteen missionaries. Missionaries do not get free tickets from the shipping companies.

Perhaps you may know some friends sufficiently interested in missionary work to be anxious to help us on our journey. Any assistance they give will be most welcome.

You have my permission to make any appeal for funds you may think advisable. I bless all those who contribute even the smallest sum in answer to your appeal - Very sincerely in Christ.³⁶

When Dr Shanahan found that he could take a more prolonged break from all these activities there was no place where he might relax better than in his native county, in particular at Rockwell, which had so many memories for him. When he arrived there on 18 August the Senior Scholastics were also in residence as it had been decided that they would take their summer break that year far from the city. Times were troubled then in Ireland and they got a taste of that as they set out to travel by train to Rockwell. A search of the train by the military disturbed their carefully planned schedule and caused their luggage to be mislaid. The peace of Rockwell soon restored their equilibrium and they set about planning their own excitements. On one occasion they were joined by Shanahan, who always seemed to be much at home in their company. Their journal, which was assiduously written up even during the recess, has this entry for 20 August: "Bonfire of brushwood at the Rock under the presidency of Br Dalmas (Colgan). Among the interested spectators were the Rt Rev. Dr Shanahan, Fr Cotter, and a few members of the community. We sang the Soldiers' Song and the the Song for the Pope. Sunday: Dr Shanahan said the mass for the public at 8.30 a.m."

Later, as Bishop Shanahan was finalising affairs before returning to Nigeria, he paid a farewell visit to Rockwell. The Community journal has this note for 19 November: "Dr Shanahan, Vic. Ap. Of Nigeria, paid a flying visit. His brother Dick, his sister Mrs Dawson with her husband and son accompanied him."

Earlier that summer while on a passing visit to Rockwell Shanahan was asked by the Director of the Juniorate, Fr Paddy Walsh to address the students. Among them was Jack Jordan, Shanahan's future biographer. This is how Fr Jordan recalled that occasion in later years:

...Then in May or June 1920, a man stepped into the vacuum. He was Fr Joseph Shanahan, just home from the mission field to be consecrated bishop of Southern Nigeria ...He was an old Rockwell boy, and as such was introduced to us in the study. The moment my eye fell on him, I felt riveted. Nothing would have made me look at anyone else while he was there. A fine figure of a man, erect and soldierly, the thrown-out chest of a paratrooper, with the fine face and beard of a second St Patrick, he looked both the ideal and the real missionary. He began to speak, low and throaty in the beginning, flashing a smile of boyish enthusiasm to the boys around, instinctively creating the right atmosphere as he covered his Rockwell past in a few humorous remarks. Then, having secured his audience, he lifted his voice, his mind, his face and even his gestures to where they obviously belonged - to the apostolate. He talked about two places - Southern Nigeria and the

Cameroons. He had a natural actor's flair for creating atmosphere. Soon we were following him over rough mountain trails in the Cameroons, listening to the cries of welcome of countless villages left priestless for five years owing to the War, kneeling with him in adoration in rough bush churches throughout the night, enjoying their marriage palavers and their quaint ideas about hell and heaven, and about all sharing their lives, their sorrows and their joys. We were transported, too, to the Igbo marketplaces, there to see pagan chiefs and elders 'going to consult' before accepting the missionary. We heard the packed churches of Owerri clamouring for priests, and the witch doctors of Amagunze clamouring against them. It was all an invitation, an appeal, a challenge and an inspiration. Before he finished, I had really found my vocation and knew I would never change. Years afterwards, following in a very insignificant way in his footsteps, both in Biafra and in the Cameroon, I often felt the greatness and the magnetism of the man.³⁷

Among the other schools visited by Shanahan in 1920 was Synge St CBS where Fr Reginald Walker was then a young student. Reporting on this visit years later Fr Walker wrote:

I remember him at that time paying a visit to the Christian Brothers school where I was in the throes of Preparatory Grade. He was introduced by the Brother Superior who told us of his work in Africa, and among other things of "Shanahan's tackle," the most dread thing, it appeared, in the Munster Rugby of his time. We could well believe it. With his great broad shoulders, his long beard unflecked by grey, his eyes burning with apostolic enthusiasm - above all that marvellous smile - he was truly a figure to capture the imagination of any boy. He captured ours. He captured us.³⁸

By the end of August Shanahan was back again in Dublin. At St Mary's he performed his first ordinations for members of the Congregation, one for the priesthood, James Flynn, and two for the deaconate.

As Shanahan saw hope for the future of his mission in these ordinations he suffered a disappointment when he learned of the impending departure of one of his missionaries, Brother Kevin Healy CSSp.

Brother Kevin, who after twelve years of active and valuable service under Shanahan's direction in Nigeria, was now about to part company with him. John J. Healy - to give him his original name - had originally opted to be a Brother in 1903 rather than go on for the priesthood on completing his studies at Blackrock College. He so ardently wanted to spend his life on the missions in Africa that, to make more certain that he would be sent there, he renounced any intention of being a priest lest he be appointed instead to a teaching post in one of the colleges in Ireland! Shanahan had plenty of evidence of his quality as catechist, teacher, manager of schools etc. since his arrival in the mission in 1908, but recently Br Kevin had come to the conclusion that he had always had a genuine vocation to the priesthood and that he had renounced that vocation merely because of circumstances beyond his control at the time. His change of mind seems to have been influenced by the impending ordination of Joe Delaney who had been serving for years in Nigeria as a lay catechist.³⁹ Shanahan was now faced with a dilemma. He had earlier facilitated and encouraged Joe Delaney when he expressed his desire to be promoted to the priesthood after several years' service in Nigeria. There was a difference, however, between the two cases. The Constitutions of religious congregations in compliance with Canon Law explicitly forbade the changing of lanes, as it were, once a member had made his profession either as brother or as a candidate for the priesthood in a

particular congregation.⁴⁰ If Br Kevin now wanted to go on for the priesthood he would have to do so outside his own congregation. And as he wanted to continue his service as a missionary in Nigeria the only practical option for him was to apply for admittance to the Society of the African Missions, who were working in the neighbouring territory. His valuable services would in consequence be lost to Bishop Shanahan at a time when he was in search of much needed personnel. The matter of Br Kevin's change of plans may have been discussed by him with Bishop Broderick SMA, who had come to perform the ceremony of ordination for Joe Delaney in Onitsha while Shanahan was on his way to Europe for the General Chapter.⁴¹ The details of the transfer to the senior house of studies in Cork may have been discussed with Fr Slattery when he visited Fr Shanahan at St Mary's, Rathmines, some months later. The details of the application for release from the Congregation were transacted with the Motherhouse by the Irish Provincial, Fr Con O'Shea, but as Dr Shanahan felt he had a duty to his former missionary colleague he wrote a covering letter, 27 August 1920, to the Superior General requesting that there be no immediate formal exclusion of Br Kevin from the Congregation, that the termination of his membership be postponed till the last moment lest Br Healy should change his mind in face of the possible obstacles and that he be able to return once more to his former mission. We quote Shanahan's letter in translation:

Dear Mgr, Fr O'Shea passed on to me the documents concerning the departure of Br Kevin from the Congregation. I send them with this present letter.

The SMA fathers have given him to understand that they will accept him once he is free to join. That is why he makes his request to leave us. But it appears to me that if the conditions imposed appear to him to be too difficult he will abandon his project of becoming a priest and remain on as he is. I know that he deserves to be excluded by the very fact that he wishes to leave the Congregation contrary to the advice of his superiors, but I ask you, Monseigneur, to be so good as to wait till the last moment to sign the document which separates him from the Congregation. Perhaps he may be just suffering from a temptation and will have the courage to surmount it. I ask this favour for a missionary who has worked generously in my mission during thirteen long years. If at last he wishes absolutely to leave – then only would I lose all hope of seeing him remain faithful to his vocation and to his mission.⁴²

That Shanahan facilitated the transfer of one of his best missionaries to another Congregation at a time when that was considered far from the normal practice indicates that he was himself in Nigeria not for any human motives but in the interests of the Kingdom of God as all mission heads had been reminded by Pope Benedict XV in '*Maximum Illud*'. In the event, Br Kevin, by then Fr John J Healy SMA, was to serve in Nigeria till his death in 1949 and was to be hailed as one of the great missionaries of that pioneering era.⁴³ In later years, Fr Healy committed to paper some of his recollections of Bishop Shanahan and these have proved a welcome if not always reliable source in building up a clearer image of the man and his work.

Early in September Dr Shanahan set off for Rome where he was to make his first official report as bishop or rather Vicar Apostolic. His report would be seen as a very heartening one to be followed by a private audience with Pope Benedict XV. Immediately after that audience Shanahan wrote to Mgr Le Roy announcing his great joy on having been received so graciously by the Pope and mentioning that His Holiness had given a very generous sum of money for his mission. For an indication

of what transpired at that audience we turn to the brief extract from his letter to Mgr Le Roy which was published in the *Bulletin Général*.

Today, 12 September, I had the great joy and the singular honour of being received in audience by His Holiness, Benedict XV. The Holy Father asked me many questions about Nigeria and took a keen interest in the little statistic of the ministry achieved there during the years 1910-15-20. He congratulated the missionaries on their great work and c commissioned me to take back his blessing to them and to all the good Christians there. If it were possible, he added, he would like to do that in person. And what a magnificent gift. The Holy Father presented me with a hundred thousand lire to help me to build the first cathedral of the new Vicariate.⁴⁴

Shanahan at a later date expanded on this account as follows:

I presented to His Holiness a summary of the Sacred Returns of Nigeria for the years 1910 -'15 -'20. He read them with intense interest and genuine satisfaction, delighted to know that in the wilds of Africa and under the equatorial sun the Kingdom of God was spreading among the poor Africans. The Holy Father repeatedly blessed the missionaries who, regardless of fevers, privations and death have left home and country to battle for Almighty God and co-operate with him in the salvation of souls. He also blessed my Christians and Catechumens with affectionate emotion. 'In this world', he said, 'I shall never see them nor speak to them, but I wish you to convey my blessing to them in each one of your 700 school-churches. I give it with all the earnestness and affection a father's heart can conceive'. He was delighted that Ireland, for which he has an extraordinary affection, is making such efforts to go to the rescue of the millions of pagans who have not yet heard of the name of Our Lord.

I besought the Holy Father to give a special blessing to the many friends and benefactors of S. Nigeria and its missionaries. These benefactors, by their generosity to the missionaries are, in the eyes of God, leading a real missionary life. On account of that I recommended them earnestly to the Holy Father, who gave them a special blessing associating them with the blessing given to the missionaries and their neophytes.⁴⁵

While in Rome Dr Shanahan made a point of saying Mass 'in the crypt of St Peter's on the altar erected over the tomb of the Prince of Apostles'. His reflection on that visit was: "How narrow the span that separates today from the day when St Peter lived with Our Divine Lord and spoke to him. The words of the Master are heard by the missionary today as they were heard by those who are now the occupants of those silent tombs: 'Go teach all nations...and behold I am with you'".⁴⁶

Another audience at Rome that Shanahan looked forward to with special interest was an interview with the Superioress of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary to discuss the commitment they had already made to come to work in Calabar in place of the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny. Unfortunately, as the Superioress was away in Brittany, no firm arrangements could be made for the moment.

Speaking of his satisfaction with his visit to Rome and the warm reception given to himself and his missionary companion Fr Jules Douvry at the French Seminary he gives expression to his great debt to his own Congregation. He acknowledges that he owes all that he is to his religious family and that he realises that he must be ever so grateful and strive to be worthy of such a mother. He concludes this very personal letter with the good news that the Pope has given him 100,000 lire towards the building of the first cathedral of the vicariate at Onitsha and

mentions that he and Fr Douvry are returning to Paris via Lourdes where they plan to consecrate the Vicariate to Our Lady.⁴⁷

It would appear that his conversation with the Holy Father was not all about the progress in Nigeria. The Pope was anxious to receive a first-hand account of what exactly was happening in Ireland at that moment. He expressed himself very happy to learn that Maynooth College had dealt so generously with him and with the foreign missions. But he was worried about the political situation and in particular about the moral implications of the hunger strike being carried out to such limits by the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence McSwiney. Shanahan is reported as having explained to the Holy Father that Ireland, being bereft of military resources, had to rely on the moral effect of the hunger strike in order to win international support for its cause as against British coercive tactics; that McSwiney was in fact a martyr for the nation. The pope is said to have been impressed by this version of the case and that he sent his blessing and a plenary indulgence to McSwiney in his name. Shanahan did in fact make it his business to gain access to McSwiney on his way home and delivered the Pope's personal message. He did not make any public mention of this incident at the time because of the troubled political situation but in later years he mentioned the details freely in interviews with close friends.⁴⁸

One notices from the journals kept by the scholastics while Shanahan was staying at Kimmage, Rockwell and St Mary's, that all were caught up in the McSwiney cause and his worsening condition was followed with mounting interest. When his death was announced, those attending the University took part in the boycott of lectures as requested by Sinn Fein, and for 29 September we have this entry: "High Mass at St Mary's by the Provincial, Fr Con. O'Shea, assisted by Fr Dowling and Fr Fahey, for the repose of the soul of the Lord Mayor of Cork and as well for those who died in Cork jail and who are daily giving their lives for Ireland." In the scholasticate at Kimmage also a special mass was offered for that intention.

It was not surprising then that the scholastics were searched by the military as they attended lectures next day at UCD. And one can understand that in this milieu Shanahan would himself be deeply moved by the daily events though he would have held aloof from any expressions of his political views. It has been frequently remarked in this context, however, that the intense national spirit at the time worked in favour of the foreign missions movement as if it were a tangible conductor of the national identity. Shanahan himself was very occupied with his preparations for his return to Nigeria with his own small army of dedicated soldiers. When he called to Kimmage and was asked to address the scholastics on his audience with the Pope he confined his remarks to what the Pope had to say about the progress of the mission in Nigeria.

Shanahan was conscious that the approaching departure of his team for Africa was something of a milestone in the history of Ireland's contribution to the foreign missions. A few months earlier the first batch of Columban missionaries had set out for China. On that occasion special prayers were offered in the senior scholasticate for them. Incidentally, they felt that they had a special family link with these pioneers as one of their own number, Timothy Quinlan, was a brother of the priest in charge of this first group. Now was the turn of Africa with not merely the biggest number ever to set out together but with the expected historic inclusion of six missionary Sisters in the party. So Shanahan planned on getting his whole team together in one community for a number of days where they could get to know one another well, discuss their problems and plans - all in the atmosphere of a spiritual 'think-in'. He sent a telegram to Paris to alert the five French confreres who were

planning to travel with him. He had also to write to the General bursar of the Congregation to lend him 20,000 francs as he could find no one in Ireland who would lend him such a sum.⁴⁹

The location chosen for this special get-together was Blackrock College. Besides being the first community from which Irish Spiritan missionaries had set out for India, Africa, the West Indies etc, it had the practical advantage of having adequate accommodation in the one building, namely the 'Castle'. Williamstown Castle, as it had been known, had been enlarged in 1906 in the expectation of a continued role in the proposed new university deal. In the event the National University of Ireland had no role for private colleges unlike the Royal University, so the Castle was relatively empty by 1920. There would be little difficulty in providing suitable accommodation also for the six sisters of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary promised by their Superior General in Rome. In the event the Sisters did not arrive. Word was received that they would not be able to travel to Nigeria for the moment. Naturally this was a big disappointment for Shanahan as one of the main objectives of this reunion was to brief them in particular and smooth their entry into mission conditions in Nigeria.

Relatively little is actually known about what went on during these five days from 16 to 21 November 1920. The journal at Blackrock is of little help. The community had been badly served in this area ever since the death of Fr Ebenrech in 1914. What a dramatic picture Fr Ebenrech would have left us, recalling the coverage he had given away back in 1893 to the visit to Ireland by the founder of the Nigeria mission, Fr Joseph Lutz. He had seen to it then that Fr Lutz had had his portrait taken by a professional photographer, and again in 1906 he had arranged for a photographer to come to the college to record the presence there of Shanahan - recently appointed Prefect Apostolic of Southern Nigeria - together with Mgr Allgeyer who had ordained him priest and Bishop O'Gorman of Sierra Leone. Happily someone secured the services of a photographer on this occasion also to make sure that a record of the historic group was available for publication in the *Missionary Annals*.

Meagre as they are we transcribe the entries left for us in the community journal at Blackrock:

16 November. Three Fathers arrived today from France to accompany Mgr Shanahan to Nigeria, Frs Bindel, Groetz, Treich and later Fr Douvry. 21 November: Mgr Shanahan celebrated Pontifical High Mass, assisted by two of his missionaries as Deacon and Subdeacon. Fr Provincial (Fr Con O'Shea) preached at Benediction. A banquet was given in Mgr Shanahan's honour to which a few clerical friends were invited.

The journalist was so economic with his entries that he makes no mention of the other happenings on that day that has marked it down in history as "Bloody-Sunday". From the Juniorate journal at the college we learn the theme of the Provincial's sermon: "And he gave to everyone of them commandment concerning his neighbour." And from the same source we know that while the 'banquet' was in progress the students played a Gaelic match which they did again on the 22nd when Shanahan and his team left for Africa. This break with rugby was a sign of the nationalistic temper of the times. That student journalist added this prayer: "God grant them a safe voyage and many fruitful years of labour among the abandoned blacks."

Writing somewhat later in the *Missionary Annals* Fr Bartholomew Wilson, former military chaplain in the Great War, was more expansive as he tried to capture

the historic aspect of the occasion:

... One hesitates to use the word "business-like" in referring to the aspect and bearing of such apostolic men, but it combines well the idea of the serious, earnest glance, the firm, energetic step, and the kindly, cheerful speech of these priests... Some had already worked in Africa; there tinges of grey in their beards, others were fresh from their scholastic or academic studies. Some among the missionaries spoke with a foreign accent – they were sons of France, the Catholic France that, since the beginning of our persecution at home, had borne, almost alone, the work of the Church in pagan lands. Somehow it seemed even natural that they should fight side by side with us now again in this glorious battlefield, for the old alliance that existed in the past between our two races has always lived on in the spiritual life, nourished, as it has been in the Irish Colleges transplanted during the penal days. We felt that under Dr Shanahan it were noble to fight and die by their sides.

Moving on to the events of the closing day he writes:

We were still pondering his words at the end of Benediction when the clear, young soprano voices rang out from the organ gallery in the soul-stirring words of the Missionary Hymn. It seemed as if the child voices that lured Patrick to our shores long ago were again pleading that their gift should be shared with their poor little black brothers on the equator... On Monday we assembled on Dunleary Pier. On deck stood a line of figures gazing wistfully on the long line of lights that marked the shore of Ireland, and we, on shore, with pride and gratitude, watched the big dark hull bear away the "Wanderers of Christ" to the battle front of a war that has never ceased – to found, perhaps, another stronghold like Iona or Bobbio beneath the southern stars.

Finally Fr Wilson reverted to the theme that returned from time to time on this great occasion, namely that they were witnessing a resumption to the great missionary tradition of Ireland in the distant past:

We had often tried to imagine the feelings of those who stood on the shores of Derry or of Galway, or of Youghal, when the little black ships put out to sea bearing these "Wanderers of Christ", PEREGRIN1 PRO CHRISTO, as they styled themselves, to pagan lands. For thus they went, Columcille and Aidan, Fursey and Columban, Shiel and Virgil, Donat and Carthage, to build or to reinforce the Irish Missionary strongholds that stretched from Ireland to Tarentum, from Brittany to the Carpathians. What giants they must have appeared to the boys who envied them on the strand and to the women who blessed them and wept for them in turn on the thresholds! What feelings of gratitude and pride stirred the manly hearts of our ancestors as they cast off the cordage and waved them out of the creek! Gratitude that our race was chosen for this glorious evangelisation, Pride that it proved worthy of the choice. We shared, I think, a little of these latter feelings as we assisted in Blackrock yesterday at the ceremonies of Farewell to Dr. Shanahan and his nine Fathers en route to Nigeria.⁵⁰

For the last stage in their preparations the missionaries adjourned to the Provincialate at St Mary's, Rathmines, to complete their packing. In this work they were assisted by the more senior scholastics from Kimmage. One of these penned for publication in the *Missionary Annals* this lively account of the hectic last minutes of the preparations:

Friday - Dr Shanahan and his missionaries should be in Nigeria by this. There

must be great rejoicing at the arrival of the new bishop and his nine companions. I hope they have all the luggage safe with them; if it gives as much trouble to get it into Africa as it did to get it out of Ireland, I pity them. I never had so busy a time as the day before the missionaries set sail. I went down to assist at the packing operations at St Mary's, but was amazed to find the travellers' rooms in a state of incredible disorder. Things were piled up on every piece of furniture: boxes, trunks and cases were spread around the floor and parcels were arriving every minute to complete the respective outfits. We took off our coats and set to work; clothes, boots, sun-helmets, raincoats, medicine chest, camp bed, every thing in fact from an umbrella to a handkerchief had to be carefully packed in the smallest possible space and in the safest possible way. At last we had all the boxes labelled and the trunks well roped; it was then that people began to remember all the things they had forgotten, so we sent for another trunk to hold the afterthoughts. I don't remember all the things we put in that box, but I know they included a large package of Glauber salts, two footballs and a pair of boots to kick them with, a thermal flask, quick-light lamp, a melodeon, and a lot of other queer things; the last parcel to go in was from a young Missionary who said he had nearly forgotten his library, as he brought up a bundle that contained Arregui, First Aid Handbook, Dr Sheehan's Apologetics, The Jail Journal, The New Code, The Ignatian Exercises and a pair of dumb-bells. I don't know if the owner saw any connection between these last two items, but the collection as a whole showed such wonderful versatility we could not refuse to find a corner for the bundle...⁵¹

As Dr Shanahan had spent so much of his time at Kimmage where he was so highly appreciated by the students of theology, he made it his duty to pay a brief visit to say Goodbye to them just before leaving for the boat for Liverpool. Then it was work as usual for the students as we are informed by the journalist: "3.45 p.m. sermon class, the sermon being given by Mr (Charlie) Heerey". The subject for the case of conscience on the following day was quite topical: 'The morality of hunger-strokes'. The reader of the paper on that subject was Mr (Joe) Gilmore."

Fr Jean Feral, one of the French priests who was due to travel with them but could not join the party at Blackrock, was waiting for them at Liverpool. Another man, who would dearly have loved to return once more to Nigeria with them, was Fr Thady O'Connor. The state of his health forbade his return to the tropics for the moment but he would be busily engaged in all sorts of work in aid of Nigeria as he joined the Promotions team working at first in Ireland and later in the USA.

From the *Missionary Annals* we learn that "After many unsuccessful efforts to secure berths, Dr Shanahan and his brave Missionary band have had their wishes realised at last. On No. 24th they set sail for Nigeria in the 'SS. Ekan'".

As the missionaries left from Holyhead on 24 November 1920 the *Missionary Annals* celebrated the event as a historic break through in the Irish mission to Africa. Quoting Dr Shanahan's final words to those who came to see them off:

"May God bless you and bless the many friends in Ireland that have helped us so generously. Goodbye to all. I will never forget you or them in my prayers and my Masses." ... Profiting by the permission given to the passengers to send letters ashore at Holyhead, as they sailed through the Irish Sea, Fr Phil. O'Connor, the Benjamin of the crowd, favoured us with a short note: "Ship overcrowded, 155 first class passengers, sea beautiful, no sea-sickness. A last look at the hills of Wicklow and then 'Our Barque from Innisfail' bounds

away. Goodbye to all, and thanks to all for the generosity and your kindness.⁵²

Many messages of goodwill were received from various quarters. Reporting on this aspect of the departure the *Missionary Annals* had this comment:

Of the many farewell greetings received on the eve of his departure, none was more cordially appreciated by Dr Shanahan than that which came from Dr Cleary of the St Columban's College, Galway: "All in Dalgan wish you God speed." As was shown by his Lordship's reply:

Ten Nigerian Missionaries sailing from Liverpool today, thank you and all at Dalgan for good wishes, which are reciprocated. This mutual greeting indicates the warm and intimate relations that exist and have existed between the Irish Missionaries to far-off China and the Holy Ghost Fathers in Darkest Africa. May this bond of apostolic charity be strengthened more and more as the years go by for thus united in spirit and in work, what an augury of faithful results in distant pagan lands.⁵³

The greatest factor in the support work for the missions from then on was the *Missionary Annals* both in the matter of raising funds and in arousing interest in and indeed enthusiasm for the missions. In this way the seeds of vocations were gradually being sown. Here is what the editor, Fr Michael Meagher, had to say about the effect of the publicity given to Shanahan's missionary team:

But wider circulation is only one achievement of the *Annals*. Its interesting articles have awakened in the hearts of thousands of our people sympathy for our Missions, as well as the desire to lend a helping hand to those who labour in that toilsome apostolate. It has besides been instrumental in bringing our Missions and our houses of formation very substantial help in the form of donations and burses. Of the £1,600 sought by and collected by Bishop Shanahan and his valiant band of Missionaries to help them on the way to Nigeria, the greater part was obtained through the medium of our little monthly. But lastly, and above all, the *Missionary Annals* has helped to sow the first germs of an apostolic vocation in the hearts of hundreds of our boys and girls, and has, during the course of the year, led more than a dozen future African Missionaries to our houses of formation. This last is the crowning achievement of our year's work, and by itself more than amply repays our labour and anxiety.⁵⁴

The *Missionary Annals* ensured that the growing number of missionary 'fans' were kept informed about the voyage to Nigeria, the first impressions of those going out for the first time, and their earliest experience of missionary apostolic work. The leisurely pace of the ship gave ample time for those with a flair for the pen to put on record their reactions, and the editor of the *Annals* was only too happy to receive such 'hot' copy. This was really the first time that Irish Spiritans had such a forum as contrasted with their French confreres who had for long enjoyed the luxury of writing and reading accounts of their missionary exploits in their own language. One senses an enthusiasm and a relish for this newfound opportunity to communicate with their confreres and with a sympathetic public and one feels in reading these letters to the editor as if Africa was being discovered for the first time, and yet when they arrived and experienced a *Céad Mile Fáilte* from the Christian community it was as if they had travelled across the seas and discovered that they were at home again. Those who had known Fr Edward Leen, in particular in his later years when he wrote only about theological or philosophical topics in a style far removed from that of the journalist, would be pleasantly surprised to read these early articles on the missions written in a vein that is positively boyish in its enthusiasm for this new world of

Africa.

Shanahan concentrated on his official correspondence. He sent his greetings to Mgr Le Roy and reported on what was an excellent voyage. He also wrote a few lines to Fr Con O'Shea, the Provincial, to thank him once again for all he had done for him during his prolonged stay in Ireland: "Freetown, 5 December 1920: Thanks for all the help when at home for so long a stay in the Province. I can never forget how good you have been to me, how kind and how charitable. May God bless you and the province."

As they stopped off at Freetown they were warmly greeted by Bishop John O'Gorman and his team of missionaries. Feeling that this meeting of the missionaries of Sierra Leone and Nigeria was a very special occasion the services of a professional photographer were arranged so as to leave us with the splendid record of the visitors and their hosts that was to see the printed page at frequent intervals over the years.

An ecstatic welcome greeted the party on their arrival at Calabar. The sight of their new bishop in his pontifical robes really had the crowd beside themselves with joy and for the moment they ignored his companions. It did not take Shanahan long, however, to notice that some of the old hands who had been holding the fort during his prolonged absence were now in need of urgent medical care. Fr Louis Ward, in particular, who had supervised all the arrangements for their royal welcome, looked so spent that he was despatched home to Ireland on the very boat which had brought them out. Others were to follow in their turn in the not too distant future. Shanahan's next letter to the Provincial, with which we close this climactic year, 1919-20, helps us to realise the problems that had now to be faced:

21-1-'21 Onitsha. Leen is with me. Ronayne is at Calabar. Fr Whitney is stationed at Emekuku with Dan Walsh. Phil O'Connor is at Anwa. Fr Ward had to go home the week following Christmas. Now Fr Liddane is leaving us. He was overworked and underfed at Ozobulu where he was all alone last year...He must go home. In all probability he will get all right. Will you get him examined by Dr Jim Magennis. His nerves, never very strong, are slightly unstrung...Br Osmond is to go home in February; he has spent 15 years in the mission and has done very useful work. I hope he will be back to us in autumn...We hear nothing out here of what is going on in the old country. I hope the trouble is ended and that peace has come back...⁵⁵

¹ Fr Louis to Fr Lena 09/04/1919; Shanahan to Le Roy 10 April 1919

² Shanahan to Le Roy 2 Oct 1917; 26 Feb 1918, 20 Oct 1919, 7 July 1919; ISR No 654

³ Shanahan to Le Roy St Vincent's Hosp 13 Aug 1919; Shanahan to Lena idem

⁴ Mary Charles Walker, the Nun of Calabar, by Colman Cooke, p. 41

⁵ Missionary Annals, Vol I pp 10ff

⁶ ISR No 469

⁷ Shanahan to Le Roy 22/09/19 GenArch

⁸ Shanahan to Le Roy 28/07/14, 12/09/14 Boite 101 1.3b; RSCG/H26/187 22/07/14; H26/188, 10/08/14; H26/189; H26/324

⁹ Mary Charles Walker - *The Nun of Calabar* by Colman Cooke pp37ff

¹⁰ Shanahan to LeRoy 08/05/19, 22/05/19, Boite 101; Cf Cooke p. 39f

¹¹ Cook, *op cit* p.41f

¹² RSCG H26/289 - 9/11/1919; ibid 290 15/10/19 and 290 (a) 09/11/19

¹³ Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria by John Jordan CSSp p.179f

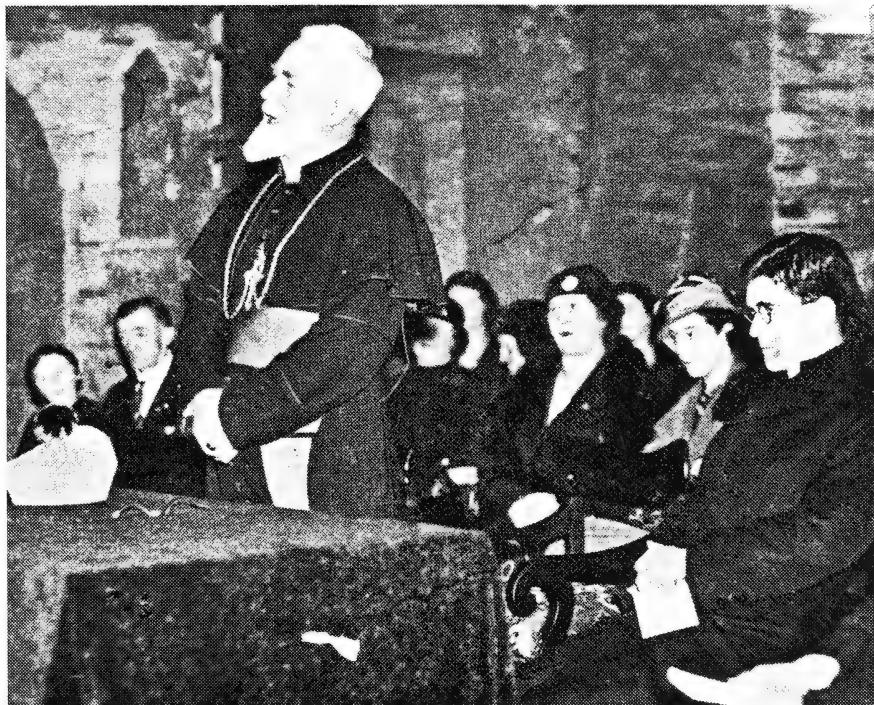
¹⁴ Shanahan to Le Roy 29/05/20

¹⁵ Shanahan to Le Roy 22/02/20 Boite

¹⁶ Maynooth Mission to Africa, by Thomas Kiggins p.9

17 *Go Teach all Nations* – a History of the Irish Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit
18 Edited by Enda Watters CSSp pp13ff
19 Ward to Lena 06/04/1920 GenArch
20 *Mémoire Spiritaine* No. 1 pp29ff, No.3 pp50ff
21 Shanahan to Franciscan Sisters in Rome Boite 191 B VII
22 Jordan op cit p 175f
23 Ibid. p175f
24 MA May 1920 p.8
25 Shanahan to Lena 25/04/20 Gen Arch
26 ISR No. 771
27 *To Africa with Love – The Biography of Mother Mary Martin* by Mary Purcell p.34f
28 Shanahan to Lena 25/04/20 GenArch
29 BG XXIX p.656; SpArch 192/B/5
30 Gen Arch Boite 192 B V?
31 Shanahan to Le Roy 29/05/20
32 Cf. Shanahan at Rockwell 1897-1902 p
33 MA July 1920 pp6ff
34 BG XXIX pp654ff; *Missionary Annals* Vol. II. No. 7 (1920) pp1ff
35 Ibid. p.15
36 Shanahan to Le Roy 04/07/20
37 MA Vol. II. No. 8 p.15
38 *Mission Outlook* June 1971 p.31
39 A Tipperary Tribute reprinted from *The Nenagh Guardian* in the *African Rosary*
40 April-June 1944 p.7
41 Shanahan to Le Roy 20/10/1918
42 Rule No. 183 states that “Once Professed, Brothers cannot pass into the ranks of the
43 Fathers”. A
44 dispensation from Perpetual Vows was reserved to the Holy See
45 MA January 1920 pp12ff
46 SpArch. Dos Pers DE/1 Shan letter re Br Kevin
47 ISR No. 798
48 BG XXIX p.763
49 MA Vol.11 No.10 p.9
50 Ibid.
51 Shanahan to Le Roy 12/09/20, BG XXIX p.763
52 *Mission Outlook* June 1971 p.31
53 Shanahan to Faugère 28/10/20
54 MA Vol.11. No. 12 p.7f
55 MA ‘Vol.III’ No. I p.13f
56 MA Vol.11. No. 12 p.3f.
57 Ibid.
58 MA Vol.111 No.I p.2
59 IPrArch

Active retirement 1932-1938



Bishop Shanahan with Dr Daniel Murphy hosting mission helpers 1936

Active Retirement 1932-38

Bishop Shanahan arrived back in Ireland from Nigeria on 4 May 1932 to begin a new stage in his life, namely retirement. Retirement was not a concept that would fit easily into his view of life. While there was work to be done for the Kingdom and while he had the energy left he would want to be involved. It would take some time then to adapt to the reality of retirement from active missionary service and to be content with helping as best he could where other people asked for his services.

On receiving confirmation that the Pope had accepted his resignation as Vicar Apostolic of Southern Nigeria, Dr Shanahan wrote immediately to the Irish Provincial Fr Richard Harnett to inform him of the decision. He then went on to say:

Now I have to ask you for a little room somewhere in your communities in Ireland. I hear you have Dr Neville with you. I will do all I can to help in the Irish Province now that I will be free to do work for that purpose. But of course Killeshandra too has a prior claim on me. I can help both and am willing to do what I can - but only after I've got a good rest.¹ As his successor, Bishop Charles Heerey, was to be absent for some time in the USA, Bishop Shanahan was asked to remain on until he was free to take up duty. When he had reached Plymouth on 1 May 1932 Shanahan wrote again to Fr Harnett to announce his arrival. He added:

I have to ask you to be good enough to let me have the use of a room in some of your houses in Dublin. Any room will do. I would prefer a room in Kimmage. Definite arrangements can be made later on...I will call to see you in Rathmines on my arrival. We had a pleasant voyage - I am in good health: the voyage did me a lot of good.²

Bishop Shanahan had known Fr Harnett as a student in Rockwell when he served there as prefect, 1897-98, and later when Fr Harnett had served as a prefect under him as dean of the College, 1900-1902.

There was no house of retirement as such in the Irish province of the Congregation as yet. Those who had grown old in a particular community where they had served remained on in that community. Missionaries in the past did not normally grow old. In fact many of them died very young. Those who were invalidated from the missions tried to integrate into some community, giving whatever service they could, mostly in the classroom. When St Mary's College, Rathmines, ceased to function as a secondary school in 1916, it was taken over as a senior scholasticate. It also served as the Provincialate and a centre for Promotions activities in favour of the missions. Some of the younger missionaries from Sierra Leone in particular got involved in such activities and in the production of the Missionary Annals. With the transfer in 1924 of the Senior Scholasticate to the Castle, Blackrock College, and Willow Park, there was more space available at St Mary's; but only for two years. St Mary's reopened as a secondary school in 1926 and all available space was at a premium. The Provincial, Fr Richard Harnett, found it convenient to remain on at St Mary's, but there was no longer room for retired missionaries. Blackrock would have been a natural choice for Bishop Shanahan for his retirement. He had transacted his financial accounts through the college bursar since he was appointed Prefect Apostolic in 1905 and had stayed there for prolonged periods in the 1920s, especially when occupied with the founding of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary. Dr Edward Leen, with whom he had worked closely 1920-22 in Nigeria, had been located at Blackrock from 1922 to January 1931, first as Dean and later as President. When he resigned

from being President in January 1931, Fr Leen was succeeded by Dr J.C. McQuaid, who had succeeded him as Principal of Blackrock College in 1925. Apart from the fact that Dr McQuaid was relatively unknown to Bishop Shanahan at this stage, the presence of another retired bishop in his community, namely Dr Neville, would have deterred Dr Shanahan from expressing any special preference for being accommodated at Blackrock just then. His stated preference for a room in Kimmage was ignored as Kimmage Manor was at this period assigned to the novitiates for clerics and brothers. Apart from members of the staff it was not encouraged by Church law that others should reside permanently in novitiates.

It is not known who took the initiative in arranging that Shanahan should take up residence in Blackrock. Most likely it was the Provincial, Fr Harnett. Fr McQuaid was then in London staying with his sister while he recuperated from a rather prolonged illness. One consideration that might have given Fr McQuaid some cause for hesitation was the presence already in his community of Bishop John Neville who was recently returned from East Africa. Fr McQuaid was himself but 35 years of age when appointed Superior and, as he was a man who liked being abbot in his own community, he would now have to cope with the challenge of having two senior missionary bishops among the members of his religious family. We have no record of his reactions to this proposal. He returned from London on 30 May 1932, and within a few days the community journal records that Bishop Shanahan was by then a member of the community. One presumes he had till then been staying in Maynooth with his sister Mary - Mrs Joseph Dawson.

When Bishop Shanahan had stayed at Blackrock in the early twenties he was given a room in the Castle. As the senior seminarians had moved into the Castle in autumn of 1924 there was normally no room available for outsiders. Bishop Shanahan was now allocated a room in Clareville, the old mansion acquired in 1900 as a residence for the Provincial superior and for the members of the Mission Band. It was actually from this house that Fr Shanahan had set out for Africa in 1902, and it was to there he returned in 1906 when, as Prefect Apostolic of Southern Nigeria, he was on his way to Paris to attend the General Chapter of the Congregation. After the Provincialate had been transferred to the newly acquired property in Kimmage Manor in 1911 Clareville had become part of the Blackrock community. Because it was mostly the senior and retired members of the community who resided henceforth in Clareville it was often referred to as "The House of Lords". It was now only a dormitory house in that for meals and for other community exercises all had to repair to the college. This involved a walk of some 150 yards which may have acted as an appetiser at times but in bad weather it presented problems for the elderly, especially as there was a steep hill to be negotiated.

Clareville House - built in 1752 - was spacious and rambling with no pretensions to architectural distinction. It comprised two sections - the main mansion and the rooms once occupied by the domestic staff and the kitchen services. The rooms in the main mansion were large and had high ceilings, which made them difficult to heat in winter time. By 1932 there was still neither central heating nor electric light. Nor was there a telephone link-up. In fact one gets the impression that Clareville, being very much on the periphery of the property, had received little attention when it came to repairs, redecoration and domestic services. The room assigned to Bishop Shanahan was located on the ground floor. As the large window faced east, he had the benefit of the morning sun but little of its light and heat as the day wore on. More significantly, the east wind blowing in from the Irish sea must have lowered the temperature of the room appreciably at times.

The first community event - 7 June 1932 - which Bishop Shanahan was invited to take part in was a picnic outing to Howth. Present also was Bishop Charles Heerey – his successor - who had arrived home to attend the Eucharistic Congress. Such community outings were a relic of the French College era and, in days when there were less occasions to absent oneself from the community, these outings were relished. In the old days special horse-drawn vehicles were hired for the day, especially when the students were involved in the outing. Bishop Shanahan had no longer the use of the private car known to his friends as the “Isis” which his sister Mrs Dawson used put at his disposal as he made his personal trips when home on holidays. And as the college had not as yet purchased a motor car, the trip to Howth must have been made by train from Booterstown.

Shortly after his arrival in Ireland Dr Shanahan received the news of the death of Mother Arsenius, a member of the Irish Sisters of Charity, a great supporter of the missions. She had been in close contact with Bishop Shanahan over the years as she tried to help his cause in every way. One of the first of the many beautiful letters he was to write while in Clareville was the following to Sister Stanislaus, who had informed him of the death. It serves as a flashback to the years when he was trying desperately to get Religious Sisters from Ireland to help in the Christian education of women in Nigeria and it shows his great appreciation for those who had supported his efforts at the time.

I have long delayed even an acknowledgement of your very kind letter informing me of the death of poor Mother Arsenius, the great generous Religious and Missionary. The intense love she had for souls, abandoned souls especially, was the inevitable radiation of her intense, passionate love of Jesus Christ. I thank God for having been brought into contact with this great lover of God, lover of all that was noble, good, lover of the special friends of God: the poor, the little ones, the nobodies of this earth.

She was ever in a place all to herself with her friends and indeed the Sisters of Charity ever since I met her for the first time in 1914 – and I met her thanks to another great friend and missionary – Mother Conception.

As soon as I can possibly get away from Dublin I will call to see you all at Foxford. You and all the Sisters have been sincere friends in the truest sense of the word. And I will kneel over the last resting place of poor Mother Arsenius before offering the Holy Sacrifice for the repose of her soul in the beautiful chapel she erected as a token of special love for Our Eucharistic Lord.

While we below will take part in the Eucharistic Congress on this earth, she, please God, will be taking part in the eternal Congress in Heaven with God’s angels and saints...I will have a special remembrance of you all during the great Eucharistic Congress Ceremonies. God bless you all.³

The first public ceremony that Bishop Shanahan assisted at in the college was the episcopal ordination of Fr John W. Heffernan, recently appointed Vicar Apostolic of Zanzibar and Kenya in succession to Bishop John Neville.⁴ It would be an invitation from Bishop Heffernan to come out to East Africa which would one day terminate Shanahan’s six years stay in Clareville. The sermon at the episcopal ordination was preached by Shanahan’s friend, Fr Edward Leen, and among the guests were the newly-elected President of the Executive Council, Eamon de Valera, past student of Blackrock, and his predecessor W.T.Cosgrave, - both being close friends of members of the Congregation.

The following week Blackrock was to witness what must be its most spectacular public event - the Garden Party hosted by the Bishops of Ireland to mark the Eucharistic Congress. Over one hundred prelates and some 23,000 of the faithful were assembled to welcome the Papal Legate, Cardinal Lauri.⁵ In attendance also were President de Valera and the members of his Cabinet. Seven of the Holy Ghost bishops were home for the occasion, including the Superior General, Mgr Louis Le Hunsec, as well as many of the missionaries who had timed their holiday to coincide with the great event. Bishop Shanahan must have been very pleased to renew his acquaintance with many of his former confreres but we have no record of his reaction to this colourful celebration of the Faith. One suspects that Shanahan as a newcomer was not at his best as yet on such social occasions whereas Bishop Neville revelled in meeting people and in appearing in his episcopal regalia. In fact, though often seen together and closely associated in peoples' memories of those years, the two retired bishops were very different in temperament and demeanour. Dr Neville fitted in to the Blackrock scene with no difficulty, almost by right. He had been a student, prefect, dean and bursar there before being called on to act as Superior in St Mary's, Trinidad, and as General Councillor in the Mother House, Paris. Bishop Shanahan on the other hand was a relative outsider having had but casual contacts with the college and community on the occasions when home from Nigeria. It would appear also that Fr McQuaid was able to relate better to Bishop Neville with whom he was to be seen more frequently in conversation as they walked the grounds. One reason for this close relationship was revealed by Dr McQuaid during the college celebrations when he was appointed Archbishop of Dublin: he had on three separate occasions volunteered for service in Dr Neville's mission in East Africa.

One occasion that must have been relished by Bishop Shanahan was the annual retreat in 1932 attended by himself and three other bishops - Neville, Heerey and Wilson. The preacher was Fr Geoffrey O'Sullivan, who had worked zealously for many years with Shanahan in Nigeria before being forced by ill-health to return home. At that moment he was replacing another of Shanahan's close associates in Nigeria, Fr James Mellet, as chaplain to the Holy Rosary Sisters in Killeshandra.

As Shanahan bade farewell in the coming weeks to the various bishops returning to their missions, he must have for the first time fully realised how much he was side-lined now that he was no longer on the first team. Nor had he many calls on his services on the home front during this first year when as yet he was viewed as a relative stranger whom people were but gradually sizing up. No one was more conscious of his outsider status than himself as he tried to find his bearings in many of the small matters of the daily routine; how to get letters posted, linen attended to, how to get oil for his lamp, fuel for his fire, how to humour the various functionaries, domestic helpers etc.

Although he made his way to the college chapel for morning prayer and the subsequent mental prayer, he had to retrace his steps to Clareville, climbing the rather steep hill to regain the oratory where he was assigned an altar to say Mass. The oratory was actually situated right over Shanahan's own bedroom. In the days before 'concelebrated Mass' was introduced, each priest in a community was allocated a special altar and a time at which he was expected to say his private Mass. There were three altars in the Clareville oratory - the main one being reserved already for Bishop Neville. Bishop Shanahan said Mass at the rear of the oratory, and all three celebrants were expected to say the words of the Mass in a subdued tone so as not to interfere with the others. This again would be a new experience for a man so accustomed to celebrate for a large congregation on the missions. The masses were normally served

by the students from the junior seminary attached to the college and these were soon aware that some priests were more pernickety about the rubrics of Mass-serving than others. These priests were avoided as far as possible. From the start the students instinctively wanted to have the privilege of serving Bishop Shanahan's Mass even if they had to race from the college to be there before the others. They were all impressed by his manner of offering Mass. One student from that period expressed his impressions as follows:

He always struck me as one who had a most tremendous love, what I might term a most affectionate and familiar love, of Our Divine Lord, and all that related to him, most especially the Holy Sacrament of the Altar and the Mass; and this devotion to the Mass was most remarkable, using the word reverently I might say it was 'spectacular.' There were some seven old Fathers there, and of course they all celebrated their masses privately, but of all the masses there was something very special about Bishop Shanahan's. He always struck me as being in deep conversation with God in a most enthusiastic fashion, as if it were an encounter with a most intimate friend for whom he had the utmost respect. His thanksgiving, which he never missed, seemed a most relishable event. He seemed to glow with an appreciation of what had transpired. And when he spoke of the Mass, you would get the impression that it was the greatest event in his life:

About Shanahan's devotion to the Blessed Sacrament another student of that period wrote in later years:

During the Eucharistic Congress there was exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the college chapel. I noticed the Bishop in the stalls. I remember being there from 9 p.m to midnight and during all that time he was kneeling erect in silent adoration. His recollection was so profound and his attitude so reverential that the passing years have failed to erase that picture from my memory.

After Mass and thanksgiving it was once more down to the college college for breakfast and later in the day for lunch, afternoon tea and supper, and again for night prayer. In later years someone with a newfangled slide rule calculated that one such retired priest had walked over two thousand miles in this process alone!

There was the occasional break for Bishop Shanahan from this routine. We learn from a letter that he had been to a ceremony in Killeshandra in mid-July. In that letter to his nephew Michael in reply to his invitation to his wedding, Dr Shanahan remarked that he was having a quiet time as he was not feeling too well.⁶ Many of the ailments he had picked up during his missionary journeys still returned to plague him as we learn from a letter after another visit to Killeshandra for the Feast of The Holy Rosary. He wrote:

The following day I called to see Dr Magennis. He gave me a warm welcome - such as he gives to all Nigerians or Africans. In addition he stuck right into my knee a most merciless needle filled with some awful stuff. Meanwhile he was lost in rapture over the Eucharistic Congress. I couldn't trouble the pious man telling me all about the mens' meeting in the Park, and at the same time forcing his needle deeper and deeper into my knee. My feelings were very mixed. Violent expletives were gradually moving upwards towards my lips - Cardinal Legate... "For heaven's sake", said I, "Will you remember you have a ... 12-inch needle with a pint of vitriol planted right in the centre of my being!"

After about five minutes I forgave him - even though he did laugh to his heart's content at the brave warrior missioner complaining about a pin-prick.

As he required continued treatment, this time administered in Clareville, he adds:

It seems there's nothing wrong with me beyond an attack of rheumatic-arthritis or something like that. I'm being treated for it. Miss Ryan - Anne - Mother Brigid's good sister, is doing the good Samaritan for me. She comes to Blackrock every other day to attend to my contrary points. The whole thing is brought about by my own negligence. I've got to remember I'm in Ireland.

The knee will be a good reminder of that particular fact.

Shanahan had relatively few visitors to his room at this stage and as he was situated in a rather remote corner of the property he felt he was living the life of a hermit. Not that he complained about this. He remarked in the letter quoted:

I'm getting back to my books - and, please God, to the quiet solitude exterior and interior, where peace is to be found. Every day I thank God more fervently for the present situation in which He has placed me. Of course I richly deserve it, but now I know he wants me to make good use of it and so make amends for the past.

At times though, Shanahan must have appreciated the change from the relative loneliness and monotony of life in Clareville to a stay with his sister in Maynooth. The Blackrock community journal, which has disappointingly few references to Shanahan, has this entry for 1 February 1933: "Dr Shanahan, who has been in Maynooth since before Christmas, returned to Clareville last night."

While staying at his sister's residence he had the use of the car known to his friends as the 'Isis', which the Dawson family had put at his disposal when home on holidays in the past. Now that he was just a private person at Blackrock he did not bring the car to the college, particularly because the community at Blackrock had not as yet acquired a car as this was seen as not being according to the norms of poverty as practised by religious. From other sources we learn of trips made by Shanahan in the 'Isis' during 1933. Having heard that four young Holy Rosary Sisters were to set off from Killeshandra on Easter Monday he drove up to bid them good bye. He then decided that he would help take some of their luggage to the boat at the North Wall and cross over with them to Liverpool to make sure that they were well looked after there and on their first long voyage to Nigeria. The Sisters were pleasantly surprised that they were given VIP treatment by all the staff once it was known that they were "Bishop Shanahan's Sisters."

While on his official trips in the 'Isis' in the past, Bishop Shanahan loved to view the scenery as he felt that it spoke to him of the beauty and loving care of God. Having heard that his friend, Bishop Broderick of Nigeria, was seriously ill in the African Missions house in Cork, he drove down there to have a long chat with him about Nigeria.⁷ And when he heard in November 1933 that the Bishop had died in France, he motored down to Cork to express his sympathies to the African Missions Fathers. As he had the company of two Holy Rosary Sisters on the return journey to Dublin he took the scenic route for their benefit. Writing about that trip he had this to say:

We passed by Lismore on the Blackwater, one of the most charming bits of scenery in Ireland, then up the wild mountains where Mount Melleray has built for itself an oasis of heavenly peace and solitude on the rugged flanks of the most barren of barren mountains.

Passing over the mountains we came in full view of the greater part of Tipperary with views stretching right across the Shannon into Connaught, Galtees, Slievenamon. The Comeragh were on guard as it were over that

immense fertile plain resting peacefully on that November morning while the sun shone brightly over it. Scenery such as we saw during that drive to Dublin can never be forgotten. What enhances its beauty is the fact that all those who live in that country know, love and praise and bless God - the beauties of land and sky and stream and woodland find a heart and a tongue in the hearts and tongues of Irish Catholics to praise and thank God, and glorify him in their name. This is man's sublime function in and with Jesus Christ to be the voice of all creation lovingly praising our creator and heavenly Father.

Even a motor drive may have more in it than mere natural pleasure as it is I fear not infrequently thought to be. My experience of travel, no matter where and no matter what the means of transport, is that one is brought by the beauty of God's works into ever closer contact with him who designed them and keeps them in existence...

The first reference in the Blackrock community journal of Bishop Shanahan being called on to take part in the life of the school and community is that he celebrated Pontifical High Mass on the Feast of St Patrick 1933, but all the journalist adds is that the college choir took part. Normally on big occasions the choir of the Senior Scholasticate in the Castle was called on to perform. Apart from the fact that for many students there was a great resemblance between Bishop Shanahan and the traditional statues of St Patrick, one of which graced the entrance hall at Clareville, the national apostle always had a special appeal for Shanahan himself. The only other occasion for that year that Bishop Shanahan is mentioned as being the celebrant for the principal mass in the college chapel was the Feast of Christ the King. The homily on that occasion was not given by Shanahan himself but by Fr George Butler.

The first mention in the community journal to Shanahan and matters relating to sport in the school was that he was asked to present the Leinster Junior Hurling Cup won by the college in May 1933. When that same team won the Senior Hurling Cup two years later a photographer was at hand to record the Cup being presented again by Bishop Shanahan. The trainer of that team was Fr Vincent Dinan, who hailed from near Shanahan's own region in Tipperary.

As so often with annals and journals the things that happen daily are not considered worth mentioning: the only time Bishop Shanahan's name appears is when something unusual is being recorded. For 21 February 1933 it is noted that Bishops Shanahan and Neville and Dr McQuaid attended the annual function of St Mary's Past Students. A month later the same three are mentioned as having gone to Rockwell for the episcopal ordination of Fr Joseph Byrne, former Provincial superior and subsequently General Councillor of the Congregation in the Motherhouse in Paris. The preacher at that ceremony was Dr McQuaid himself. In the photo taken of the principal guests we see Dr Shanahan standing beside Eamon de Valera, President of the Executive Council. One wonders did Dev mention that he had been present at Dr Shanahan's own ordination as priest at Blackrock College in 1900.

Later Shanahan was to meet Bishop Byrne and one of the ordaining prelates, Bishop Bartholomew Wilson, at a special luncheon given at Blackrock as they set off for their respective missions in East Africa. The fact that both these prelates would have Dutch missionaries working in their vicariates of Bagomoyo and Kilimanjaro may explain why Shanahan was invited to visit the houses of the Congregation in Holland at this time. As Fr Bernard Hilhorst, the Provincial of the newly erected Dutch province, was making a great effort to create a new missionary spirit among his aspirants it is significant that several of the Irish bishops were invited there. Bishop Shanahan availed of this first trip to the continent since his retirement to call to France

where he was asked to address the senior seminarians in Chevilly. They recalled him as having generously stressed that the great work done during his era in Nigeria should be attributed in great measure to Fr Lejeune as it was he who devised the strategy of evangelisation through the schools which turned the tide in favour of the missionaries.

Because of his relative isolation in Clareville Shanahan must have relished these trips abroad which put him in contact once more with the active apostolate. But whereas he had few visitors to his room in Clareville, there was no shortage of distinguished visitors to the college itself. On the 12 February 1933 the college was host to President de Valera and his son Vivian as they relaxed after the rigours of the recent general election campaign when Dev was returned to power for the second time. The guests remained on for several hours, so it is possible that Shanahan got his first real opportunity of meeting Dev face to face. In the dying days of 1933 another distinguished guest dropped in, this time for a brief courtesy call, namely Monsignor Riberi of the Nunciature returning Dr McQuaid's courtesy call with Christmas greetings. The next time Monsignor Riberi called to Blackrock it was specifically to see Dr Shanahan in connection no doubt with Nigeria as he had been posted as Apostolic Delegate to East and West Africa. By the time Monsignor Riberi was to visit Kenya in 1939 he was to renew his acquaintance with Bishop Shanahan who by then was residing there.

Nigeria was seldom far from Shanahan's own thoughts during his exile as can be seen from the many letters he wrote to people interested in the missions, especially to the Holy Rosary Sisters. The missions would not have been the main interest in daily conversation at Blackrock. Matters academic and sport would be the natural topics for staff and students. Not that the foreign missions were forgotten. The students had occasional concerts to raise funds for the missions. The photographs in the College Annual each year featured the prefects and past students recently ordained from the Castle and being assigned to the missions. One mission function that must have given special pleasure to Shanahan was the showing on 3 October 1933 by Fr Joe Horgan of the film on the Little Flower, Patroness of the Foreign Missions. Shanahan had a special devotion to St Thérèse. In 1920 he had made a pilgrimage - albeit somewhat reluctantly - to her grave even before she was beatified to seek her intercession for his mission. He had some difficulty at that stage in associating an enclosed Carmelite nun with work on the missions as he had known it till then. Very impressed by what he learned at Lisieux, he was to greet lay missionary helpers from then as "Fellow missionaries." Again in 1922, when his eyesight showed alarming signs of deterioration, it was to Lisieux he went on pilgrimage to ask for a miraculous intervention. That new film on the life of St Thérèse had a special interest for him as it had been produced under the inspiration of Père (now Blessed) Daniel Brottier, former missionary in Dakar and friend of Mgr Hyacinthe Jalabert whom Shanahan had as his director when a student in Cellule. When next in France, Shanahan would call to Auteuil to see at first hand the magnificent work being done by Père Brottier and his team for the orphans of France, all of which was put under the special patronage of St Thérèse.

The appointment on 3 July 1934 of Dr Daniel Murphy as Provincial Superior signalled a new era in the Irish Province of the Congregation. Ten years earlier, when appointed Principal of Rockwell College, he had initiated a new spring for the college there. Now he was to put his organisational powers and his personal drive and vision at the disposal of the Province as a whole and of the missionary movement.⁸ One of his first creations was the 'Burse' - a remodelled version of the Missionary League

now being specially restructured to provide the necessary funds to expand and maintain the proposed new enlarged senior scholasticate. This part of the work was made easy by the new and highly successful scheme, which provided for a weekly subscription of only a penny-halfpenny by each member and collected by voluntary Promoters. Aware of the great potentialities of Dr Shanahan - hitherto strangely ignored - he saw to it that he was to be invited to take part in the work of the province in areas where his charism could be utilised.

The first assignment given by Dr Murphy to Shanahan was to preach the annual retreat in French to the Bon Sauveur Sisters in Carriclea near Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. These Sisters arrived in Ireland in 1904 as a result of the persecution of religious orders under the Combes regime. Over the years several members of the French Province of the Holy Ghost Congregation had been invited to preach their annual retreat in French. The French language presented no difficulty to Shanahan but he was acutely aware that he had little experience in conducting an eight-day retreat for Sisters. Referring to this experience four years later he wrote:

"On Wednesday I have to cross over to England to give my last retreat in Europe! I have given but few. Strange my first effort was tried on the poor French Sisters near Dungarvan.." To gauge the Sisters reaction to this first effort of Shanahan we quote from the community journal still kept in French:

July 1934. From the 9th to the 18th our annual retreat was preached by Mgr Shanahan of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. This good bishop returned from the missions to recuperate his health touched us with his great piety, his exquisite delicacy, his charming simplicity. In his presence we really felt like children beside a good father. His talks were simple but full of a truly supernatural spirit which inspired us to a fervour and a sincere desire to belong more and more to Our Saviour. Monseigneur left us on the 19th promising to return from time to time...⁹

The Sisters invited Shanahan to return to preach the customary three days retreat at the end of the year but circumstances prevented him at the last moment from fulfilling that engagement. Dr Murphy had other more pressing plans for him.

Early in January 1935 two big reunions of the lay mission helpers were organised to take place in Blackrock College with the Senior Scholastics from the Castle and Kimmage taking an active part in the arrangements. Realising the dynamic appeal of Bishop Shanahan as a public speaker, Dr Dan Murphy called on him to address the assembled group in the packed Concert hall. The event proved an inspiring experience, not least for Shanahan himself as he rose to the occasion, holding his audience enthralled by his graphic description of his first contacts with Africa when a missionary had to be all things to all people. In particular his account of saying Mass in a leper colony where he learned to forget the many real hardships of life for a European missionary in the tropics when compared with the sufferings of the lepers. But above all he inspired his audience by the ideals he put before them as he addressed them as "fellow missionaries." Dr Shanahan concluded his address with the challenge:

This, then, is what you are called upon to do; to help in sending other missionaries - priests, brothers and sisters - to continue on this glorious work; to enable Christ to establish his Home in every heart in Nigeria, in every heart in Africa - in every heart in the World. May there rise from each heart both here and in Africa glory to God and thanksgiving for his Divine love which his poured forth through us on His poor children.¹⁰

When addressing a still bigger attendance a week later he touched on another topic near his heart at all times, namely Christian education. The Blackrock community journalist wrote: "Dr Shanahan urged the necessity of educating the young in Christianity if a Christian people is to be the outcome. By doing so a Christian social structure was formed."

Happily a press photographer has left us with two records of the occasion, a splendid study of Dr Shanahan addressing the crowd from the stage flanked by the organisers - Dr Dan Murphy conspicuous among them - and a section of the packed hall eagerly listening.

Obliged to attend College Union functions Shanahan must have found such occasions less than riveting as he would not be familiar with many of the participants. The year 1935 saw a change in the Blackrock function as it was held once more in the college, cementing thereby the link with the alma mater. The President of the Union, Tom Morris, in a well-prepared address made a lengthy reference to the foreign missions, which must have pleased Dr Shanahan. He went on to point out that it was an integral part of the programme for the College Union to give practical support to the missionary work of the Congregation by sponsoring a Perpetual Missionary Burse.

At that Union function Dr McQuaid took as his theme what Shanahan had spoken about earlier in the year, namely the nature of a Christian education. Shanahan had often spoken of the necessity of stressing the supernatural aspect of Christian education, the 'divinising' of all aspects of life by co-operating with God's grace. He would have agreed word for word with Dr McQuaid when he said:

While in its due balance, it rightly embraces every form of training, Catholic education aims primarily at permeating every human activity with the energy of divine life... Methods may be diverse in Catholic colleges, but the aim and spirit of Catholic education must ever be to maintain each child, through all his varying activities, in the divine life of grace.¹¹

Having seen the effect on his audience of Bishop Shanahan's personality and eloquence, Dr Dan Murphy saw to it that he was involved much more in the life of the Province, especially in the matter of giving conferences and even retreats. One type of retreat that Shanahan had some misgivings about was to students in the senior seminary. Because of the less than ideal opportunity he had had of doing a serious study of the various branches of theology during his student days and after, he was conscious of being at a disadvantage when speaking to those who were immersed in the theology manuals. He now availed of the leisure time afforded him in Clareville to do some extra reading. In particular he was thrilled with the books that began to come in a steady stream from the pen of his friend Fr Edward Leen. What the senior seminarians wanted from Shanahan, however, was not some one else's thoughts but his own, especially his experiences and reflections on life on the missions. He asked the Sisters in Killeshandra to pray for the success of his first such retreat to the senior seminarians early in September 1934. Unfortunately the journalist has only a one-line entry for that retreat but it is significant: "Dr Shanahan gave a long and interesting lecture on the Apostolate." Fr Jordan, Shanahan's future biographer, wrote about his recollections of that retreat:

It was only when he left his roughly prepared notes and let himself go about the missions that he really came to life and left us feeling thrilled and uplifted. By the end of the week we all felt renewed in spirit. The House of Theology literally became dynamised spiritually to an extent never before experienced and a deeper missionary impetus gave us new life and new hope. For although we had excellent teachers, confessors and directors, not one of them had

missionary experience. With Shanahan, fresh air literally blew through the scholasticate.

One particular conference that made a deep impression on the theology students was that on Ibo women:

You must see the image of Our Lady in every woman...but especially in the Ibo women since it is with them you will be dealing. The Ibo women are wonderful...if God had so willed he could easily have chosen one of them to be the mother of his Son. The women are extremely good. They have their own standards of morality, and their own laws about marriage...about espousals...about relations with men. Their laws and observances are different to our church laws..., but they are based on a high moral concept of natural law, and ninety percent of the women observe these meticulously. They live close to God. There will be millions of them in heaven, I am sure of that.

Treat them as you would treat Our Lady - with great respect. Be nice to them always - never rough, never shout at them. Above all, do not look down on them .. remember they size you up far more accurately than you them. They have a deep innate sense of modesty especially when men are present ... they will quickly see that your standards of modesty are high, without being prudish they will see you not so much as man, but a man of God, and once they accept you that way, they will have unlimited confidence in you ... come to God through you. The African woman is never an occasion of sin for a good man. Virtue and vice are always from within. If you really desire to be a good missionary, women will help, not hinder you.¹²

When the retreat was over Shanahan wrote to the Mother Superior of the Holy Rosary Sisters: "The Retreat is over! God did grant me very exceptional help during these days that meant so much for those future priests to whom the Holy Ghost sent me as His instrument to speak the words of life that he alone could and would suggest. I had on not a few occasions to leave the whole conference to be suggested to me by Him at the prayer of Our Blessed mother."¹³

Those who were asked about these retreats in later years said that his theme was "the divine life and God's grace."

Shanahan was not at ease unless he had prepared these talks in detail even if he deviated from the prepared text later. On one occasion when called to the phone during a conference to the senior students he appeared rather upset on his return that he had lost the thread of his discourse. He was more at his ease when addressing the students in the Juniorate, and they felt very privileged indeed when he gave the three-day retreat that was usual in preparation for receiving the habit or soutane as was then customary in the Congregation. Naturally he was most at home when speaking about the missions and the spirituality necessary for a missionary. As he addressed the novices in 1933 they recalled that he did not delay on incidents from his missionary experience but concentrated rather on the essential work of a missionary, namely to realise that he was cooperating in the work of making people children of God. When he mentioned all that a missionary would have to experience from the tropical heat, mosquitoes and long journeys he reminded them that they had already plenty of opportunities to make such sacrifices in small things. One instance that struck them was putting up patiently with a boring person who was always speaking about himself! As he addressed the theology students they noticed that he did not speak from his notes but as he strove to explain deep spiritual truths and experiences he seemed to be struggling to find the suitable word to convey exactly what he wanted

them to understand. Some recalled him giving a simple illustration from ordinary life on how to behave. A young priest who was driving him on a long journey recalled him remarking: "I notice that you sometimes drive fast and other times slow. In life we must try to drive at the same pace whether things are going bad or good for us." His very presence could be a sermon at times. Two young priests were travelling with him and as they boasted about how deftly they had dealt with a particular beggarman who had proved himself a nuisance they soon realised that the Bishop would have behaved quite otherwise and they felt ashamed of themselves.

Occasionally Shanahan was called on to address a Legion of Mary meeting away from the college. One night as he returned rather late from such an appointment he found the inner door of the Clareville porch locked for the night and as he had not taken the precaution of bringing his key with him he decided to sleep on an old wicker chair in the porch rather than inconvenience those already in bed. A junior member of the community, a prefect, came in late to Clareville that night and was amazed to hear snoring coming from the wicker chair. On wakening the Bishop he was surprised to learn that he had not rung the bell lest he disturb people because of his own mistake. Shanahan then added: "I rather enjoyed it before I went to sleep because it brought back all sorts of memories of Africa to me." It reminded him that when he arrived late in Africa he would have to lie on the mud floor in a native hut. The only thing that was lacking now was the occasional hen, or a goat or two, which would wander into the hut at night. "I began to think of Africa, and these shrubs around me brought back memories. And I said now this is going to be very inconvenient and very cold, but I will offer it up for my dear Africa."

This characteristic of never wanting to inconvenience anybody was noted by all who lived with him at this time. The student barber - a first year Philosophy student in the Castle - was told to call up to Clareville to give Dr Shanahan a haircut. Naturally he was a trifle overawed by his client. The Bishop soon had him at his ease. He spoke to him as to an equal, and hearing that he was from Cavan he told him the story of how he picked on Killeshandra for the launch of the Holy Rosary Sisters, adding that Bishop Finegan made only two conditions - that he would not be financially responsible and that he would not have to provide their spiritual pastor. Shanahan then advised the student barber that whatever he did never to retire from the missions while he still had energy to work. When the job was finished the amateur barber went to sweep up the clippings but Shanahan took the brush from him saying: "No. No. I reserve that privilege to myself. I don't want anyone else ever clearing up my mess."

The college matron, Sister Scholastica, when asked in later years for her personal recollections of Dr Shanahan said their first encounter was typical. Shortly after her arrival at Blackrock she met the two veteran missionary bishops on the avenue. Not being able to avoid them she had to face them. Bishop Neville presented his bishop's ring to be kissed as a matter of course. Shanahan kept his hand behind his back so that she would not have to curtsey and kiss his ring also as she was carrying some of the tools of her trade. She saw that very small gesture on the part of Shanahan as typical of his constant sensitivity to others. And when he visited the convent apartment in 1934 to welcome the newly arrived Sisters from Selly Park, Birmingham, the first thing he noted was that all the chairs had their backs rigidly to the walls. He proceeded to move them gently forward saying that in a home even the chairs should be seen to be welcoming!

A prefect joined up with Shanahan one day as he took a stroll around Willow Park to where the Preparatory School was being transferred in 1936. The prefect later recalled that walk as follows:

It was a blustery day and leaves from a beech tree brushed against his face. He reached up and held one of the leaves and began to look intently at it. He said: 'Look at this, isn't it absolutely marvellous, and see those tiny things like veins going through the leaf, like as if it were coming up from the root of a fine tree, and it reaches out into every part of every one of these leaves. There must be thousands of them on the tree, and that is but only one tree - and there are countless numbers of trees, a vast variety of types of trees, and leaves and foliage on trees throughout the world. It is absolutely marvellous, and God is behind all this, and without him they couldn't be. And he is continuing to pour out life into every form of life, and it is all around us. We realise when we think about it like that, how immense he is, and yet he deigns to associate with each one of us, as with an intimate friend.'¹⁴

Shanahan could see God's life and love in the ordinary things and yet not sound in the least preachy. He liked books on nature ever since his introduction to botany in the science classes in Cellule where he did his secondary studies.

One of Shanahan's pastimes in Clareville was listening to musical broadcasts as we learn from this recollection of another prefect:

I was stationed in Rockwell but paid a brief visit to Blackrock. It was a cold and showery evening and as I was walking up the drive to the college I met Bishop Shanahan. He spoke to me for a few minutes and on learning that I was a visitor from Rockwell he invited me to listen to a broadcast of Handel's Messiah. I was delighted and assured him that I would avail myself of his kind invitation. At the appointed time I went to his room and as soon as I knocked, he opened the door and gave me a cordial welcome. I was at the time only a prefect so such a hearty reception from a dignitary of his status and from one so senior to me in years was certainly very much appreciated by me.

As we had a few minutes before the broadcast of the Oratorio, he chatted with me about my work etc. and his sincerity and simplicity enchanted me. During the recital he closed his eyes and so I spent a good apart of the time observing him. I noticed that during the first part of the Oratorio he did not speak a word but became absolutely absorbed in the words and the music. At the interval he suddenly remembered he had a guest and praised the recital. He pointed out to me the wonderful influence good music had on a person's character and how we should cultivate a taste for it. At the end of the recital he thanked me for making the evening an enjoyable one because he had doubled his joy by sharing it.¹⁵

There was a piano in the parlour beside Shanahan's bedroom and when the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas were introduced at Blackrock in 1934 a senior member of the Clareville community, Fr Joe Baldwin, who had been a prefect in Rockwell with Shanahan at the time when Gilbert and Sullivan operettas were introduced there in 1898, got very enthusiastic about certain tunes he had heard in the college concert hall. He frequently drummed them out on the piano, which must have caused some annoyance to Shanahan next door. When the music director, Fr Brendan Timon, called to see Dr Shanahan, he remarked: "Brendan, if you are offered a good price for that piano I will have no objection to its being sold!"

There is no record of Dr Shanahan and Fr Joe Baldwin recalling their exploits as they played together on the Rockwell team captained by Baldwin, but Shanahan did retain his interest in rugby. Once, in order to convince someone that he had regained his usual good health, he mentioned that he had already been at three representative rugby matches by March 18 1933. Realising what games mean in a school context he had written a few years earlier about the Dominican school in Cabra:

In Cabra there's nothing but visions of battles fought and lost and won and re-lost and recaptured - the whole world is agog looking forward to the gigantic struggles of Friday. I can feel exactly as the Sisters and students feel the excitement of the coming game. Blackrock Senior Boys' Team is playing in the semi-final for the Senior cup on Thursday. If they win they are to meet Clongowes next week!! And you know what that means! Almost as much as the Cabra and Loreto match.”¹⁶

Much as he would have liked to attend an International at Lansdowne road, we find Shanahan mentioning in a letter that he is thinking of offering up the sacrifice and giving his ticket to a returned missionary, Fr William Danaher, whose ordination he had performed at Blackrock in 1926. One rugby match he enjoyed was the Bateman (interprovincial) Cup Final won by Blackrock in 1937, and when asked by the captain, Phil Crowe, to join them in the celebrations in the Gresham Hotel, he readily complied and added his signature to the football autographed by the members of the victorious team. Two years later, when Shanahan was by then in East Africa, the news came that Blackrock had won the Bateman Cup once again and people were rather surprised to hear Shanahan exclaim “I would love to have been at that match!”¹⁷

‘Recollection’ in Chevilly

A regulation was made in a general chapter of the Congregation that all priests of the Congregation must, some ten years after ordination, do a month’s retreat or ‘Recollection’ as it was known. Each year from 1929 a group met for this exercise in Chevilly outside Paris where they were far removed from their normal contacts. The appointed director gave a series of talks on theological and pastoral themes, and each member was expected to give a talk on his life work or interests. In 1935 Shanahan asked to be allowed to do this month’s Recollection in Chevilly where he had done his novitiate and part of his theology. Having got the approval of the Provincial, Dr Dan Murphy, he wrote to the Superior General, Mgr Louis Le Hunsec, notifying him of the arrangement and asking for permission to call to the Motherhouse to renew his acquaintance with members of the Generalate whom he had known so well in the past. This was his first letter to the Superior General since he ceased to be head of the Mission in Nigeria. He mentions that he looked forward with eagerness to retracing his steps as Chevilly had so many memories for him.¹⁸

We get some insights into Shanahan’s thoughts during this special month in the letters he wrote to various Holy Rosary Sisters, mostly those who were in the novitiate in Killeshandra or preparing to take their perpetual vows in Nigeria. We take a few extracts from these letters in chronological order.

Writing to the Mistress of novices on 25 July 1935 before leaving for France he said:

Now I am going to do a month’s retreat - or recollection - or rather less strict form of Retreat in my old home - France - where my religious life began some fifty years ago - just as the first missionaries were sailing for Nigeria.

How I thank God for granting me the privilege of making this Retreat. I recommend myself to your good prayers and to the prayers of your novices

and postulants. I will write to the group of eleven-elect - for profession - from France.

The Recollection exercise began on 28 July with forty members from the mission, the colonial dioceses entrusted to the care of the Congregation and six from the home provinces. Dr Shanahan was the first bishop to participate in such a reunion and his presence was greatly appreciated according to the account published in the *Bulletin Général* "because his many years in Africa gave him a missionary dimension and because of his modesty or simplicity." The conductor and main speaker was Fr Jules Remy, who had performed this service since the project was launched in 1929. A 'pilgrimage' was organised each week to shrines in Paris. The outing to the national shrine to the Sacred Heart at Montmartre was prepared for by a special lecture from Fr Émile Herbinière. Another outing headed for Auteuil where they were shown the great work being done for orphans by Père (Blessed) Daniel Brottier and his team under the auspices of St Thérèse to whom he had dedicated the work and the beautiful church. Both these pilgrimages would have meant much to Shanahan. Normally also there was an outing to the shrine of Our Lady of Victories which had a special significance for the Congregation because of its close association with the Venerable Libermann. We are told that Shanahan gave an inspiring talk on the mission in Nigeria and as he had got so carried away he had to apologise for having overstepped the allotted time. He was greeted with enthusiastic applause and told to continue on!

The group was favoured by two visits from the Superior General, Mgr Le Hunsec, who availed of the occasion to meet all those home from the various missions. The official account published in the *Bulletin Général* spoke highly of the spirit of community, fervour and joy, which animated the proceedings and inspired many to look forward to being back again.¹⁹ The two representatives from other provinces, Fr Laurenz Kerschgens from Germany and Bishop Shanahan, promised to promote the launch of such a 'recollection' at home.

This then is the background from which Bishop Shanahan wrote his letters to the Holy Rosary Sisters who were preparing for profession of vows. To a Sister about to make profession of her Final Vows he wrote from Chevilly on 31 July:

As you know I am doing a short second novitiate of one month. We are a group of missionaries of all ages and nations and belonging to almost all the different African and American missions - and we all so happy to be once again what we were, oh! those long, long years ago - now God gives us the opportunity to see how we kept the vows we made the day of our Profession. What a grace that is for all of us, especially the ancients like myself. Won't you pray for all and for me.²⁰

Writing the same day to a Sister who had written to him quite some time back about her joy in making her final Profession when she had expected that he would be present only to be disappointed, he expands on his understanding of what such a profession means and the joy it brings:

It is a long time since you sent me a lovely letter full of all the joy that was overflowing from your heart as you announced the good news of your admission to profession of perpetual Vows. I was to be with you for that great day - God arranged otherwise. We will pray only all the more fervently that God's holy will may be done always and everywhere especially in the hearts of those that are dear to Him, that his will be done regardless of the cost - so He did when he was on this earth of ours - I am with you in heart and soul, my very dear Sister, especially on this occasion when you gave your whole being to Jesus Christ forever...

He then waxes lyrical on the divine joy that we share already and that in spite of the hard road ahead will one day merge into the heavenly joy of eternity.

In a letter to the Mother Superior in Killeshandra after the Profession ceremony there he had this to say:

...to all without exception I send all the love of charity that is in my heart for each and all. The thought of them and of the whole work in Killeshandra and Nigeria is my greatest source of happiness because it makes me love God and His poor children in Africa all the more. I see in the Sisters so many great apostles of the knowledge of Christ's love, so many living examples and sermons in their own life of the beauty and peace and happiness of a soul that knows, loves and serves Christ, living in Him, with Him, by Him, for Him.

When I return to Ireland I will have the opportunity of telling you and your novices something of our "novitiate" here, made up of all ages and types of missionaries and from all parts of Africa.

Of the many happy months of my life this is among the very happiest - what a signal favour it is to be granted the favour of having a month's "novitiate" just as an old missionary is about to cross the frontier between Time and Eternity. Any day the screen - the screen of this poor old body of ours - may fall to leave the soul standing in the presence of Jesus Christ - now the Judge - upon whose decision depends eternity in heaven or(*indecipherable*)...It is a wholesome thought to think of the possibility contained in that....I see now more fully realised than ever the beauty of religious life - the staunch fraternal love both human and divine that binds us all together in and with Christ - in and with poor old Africa for Christ. We have all fought many a hard battle, weathered many a storm; known the ferocity of Satan's assaults, thinking at times that all was lost. And here we are together after it all with greater faith and hope and love in God than ever - and for each other in God; ready to face it all again and again - for we know all God has done for us - how can we ever distrust Him? And now I see you in Killeshandra joining our ranks to swell our numbers and continue the battle for Christ when we are gone. This is the joy that surpasses all other joys in an old missioner's heart to see that the work for the love of Christ will continue with increased zeal and energy as he closes his eyes.

Later he wrote to the Superior General to thank him for the privilege of the experience of renewing his commitment to the Congregation in the company of so many missionary confreres. On the occasion of his meeting with the Superior General, Mgr Le Hunsec, Shanahan had asked would there be any objection to his returning to Nigeria on a visit if invited to do so. On being told that there was no objection on the part of the Generalate, Shanahan wrote to his successor, Dr Heerey, mentioning the fact that there would be no objection to his accepting such an invitation in connection with the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Vicariate and of the consecration of the cathedral in Onitsha. On receiving the coveted invitation from Dr Heerey Shanahan wrote to the Superior General expressing his happiness and indicating that if required he would be only too willing to help out in so far as his health permitted in any ministry in any station. He says he hopes the Generalate may be able to give approval for such a proposal and he guarantees that such ministry will in no way intrude on matters dealing with the administration of the Vicariate.²¹ That guarantee was stressed because Shanahan had mentioned that in an earlier letter Bishop Heerey

had expressed some doubts about the advisability of his returning to Nigeria even for the jubilee.

Nigeria revisited

When Shanahan was writing to Mother Brigid Ryan in May 1935 there was little prospect that any of the older missionaries would be allowed to return to Nigeria. It was not a place for those in poor health. Naturally, this caused much pain to those who had given their best years to the mission. Shanahan refers to instances of this in France and nearer home:

Father Foley was with me. He was saying goodbye - and oh! he was so lonely because of his dear mother. She is now so aged. He will hardly ever again see her alive. He with Father Liddane and Father Daly sailed on Wednesday last for Nigeria.

Yesterday a letter came to me from poor old Father Bubendorf - the 'Archdeacon' of Nteje and Uturu! He's broken-hearted! He had just been informed that neither himself nor Father Bisch was wanted back in Nigeria. We were all to be there for the famous jubilee!... well, all these two other ancients can offer to God as their jubilee gift is the gratitude they feel for the privilege bestowed on them by Our Lord in calling them to work with him for over a quarter of a century on the banks of the Niger. Now they realise the full truth of the apostle's saying 'servi inutiles sumus' (We are useless servants) - they do and still love and ever will love Nigeria, remembering only all that's best in it and of it. Both are going to the island of Reunion just beyond Mauritius, there to continue to work until God calls them away.

Finally, poor Brother (Osmond) Healy came into my room yesterday carrying his little "Bull" in his hands as if it were a rope wherewith he was to hang himself - (you remember the Nteje story in that connection?). Poor old Brother Healy had written asking for a final favour - and the crowning of all previous favours - the favour of being recalled to Nigeria - poor old man, he hoped against all hopes . . . of course the reply came in the negative. Brother Armond, so Brother Healy tells me, is not to return either - health reasons, of course. But the old men can never see that they have grown old and useless and are a burden to themselves and to everybody. But there's something pathetic about the whole thing, and also something very beautiful - having to leave one's mission broken up and useless and being told this, gives a missionary the grand opportunity of doing two things very thoroughly: first, realising at long, long last that he is nobody, nothing in the eyes of man and God, and, secondly, offering to God as his last...²²

Towards the end of October Dr Shanahan himself received the longed-for invitation to return to Nigeria for the ceremonies to mark the Golden Jubilee of the mission and the solemn blessing of the Onitsha cathedral. Naturally he was filled with joy and wrote immediately to others interested to share that joy. First his letter to the Superior General, Mgr Le Hunsec:

A pressing invitation has just arrived from Dr Heerey of Nigeria asking me to come to Onitsha, Nigeria, for the great celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of the Vicariate on the 8 December, feast of the Immaculate conception.

In a previous letter he had written that he foresaw some difficulties about his return to Onitsha:

I spoke of that to your Lordship during my visit to Paris for the Recollection and you assured me that there was no objection on the part of the Superior

General to my going back there that on the contrary you expected that I would be invited.

Presuming your authorisation I wrote to Dr Heerey telling him that the Mother House would not place any obstacle to my accepting his invitation. I would go to Onitsha by the first boat leaving from Liverpool.

Dr Shanahan then reveals that he was interested not merely in returning to be present at the Jubilee ceremonies: he would love to be able to stay on to do some small ministry if that were feasible:

It is possible that Dr Heerey in his need for personnel might agree to my doing ministry in one or other of the mission's stations. It would be a cause of great joy for me to be able to render such by doing ministry in whatever station he might wish to place me. I would be very grateful if you could let me know that you approve of such a project. I would stay on in Nigeria as long as my health would allow me to work. It is obvious that I would be very careful not to interfere in the affairs of the administration of the Vicariate.²³

In a more relaxed and joyful tone he wrote the same day, 30 October, to the Superiorress in Killeshandra as follows:

I am to sail for Nigeria in a few days, a fortnight at the latest. Dr Heerey has sent me a pressing invitation, the second or third since last year - but this is final and definite - to be present at the jubilee celebrations in Onitsha.

I need not tell you how happy I am and how grateful to God - and after God, to Dr Heerey.

I will call to see you and all in Killeshandra before I sail once again for my beloved old home on the banks of the Niger.

Writing again on 11 November to Killeshandra after his visit there and just as he was leaving that evening for the boat, we sense his almost childlike joy at the prospect of his returning to Nigeria cheered by the happiness it has caused to others as well:

Your happiness at seeing me so happy at the prospect of going back to Nigeria added ever so much to my happiness, great as it already was. For to see you and the novices happy as you are is the greatest happiness of my life.

I will never forget that farewell, when one and all told me with heart and lips their joy at seeing me off to Nigeria. So that ideal - the long wished-for realisation of which is the novices' dream - for a missionary religious Sister is "off to Nigeria in the morning."

For the 11 November 1935 the Blackrock community journal has this meagre entry: "Rt Rev. Dr Shanahan took his departure for Africa. There was coffee after dinner in his honour." Coffee in that context normally included something extra to strengthen the coffee and that a toast was proposed to Dr Shanahan by the superior Dr McQuaid. The students gathered at the hall door to bid him farewell. One recalled him standing as he stood on the steps to say goodbye. He raised his hands to heaven and said: "What can I return to the Lord for all the kindness he has shown to me?" Just as he was leaving he was handed a batch of letters from several well-wishers, among them the Holy Rosary Sisters in Nigeria, who were looking forward eagerly to his arrival. Another treat that Shanahan appreciated, as we learn from his letter written on board ship to the Provincial, Dr Dan Murphy, was that among those who accompanied him to the boat, were the Superiors of all the communities of the Province.²⁴

There were few things that Shanahan relished more than these voyages on the high seas. The vast expanse of the ocean and the leisurely passage of the ship not merely allowed him to relax in body: it stimulated his mind and soul moving him to commune with nature and with life in general seen from a supernatural perspective.

And he allowed his communings to fill the letters that he felt compelled to write to his closest friends. One of these was Mother Brigid Ryan with whose family in Mountmellick he had always felt very much at home. After singing the praises of the caring paternal Providence that had arranged his return to Nigeria in a letter dated 17 November 1935 he diverged into the need for the missionary to have a strong faith in Providence especially when confronted with dangers. He then gives his thoughts free rein:

Such are the thoughts that run in streams through my mind as we sail down, ever nearer and nearer to Africa - of all that has happened since that first voyage in 1902 nothing remains in my mind and heart except all that's beautiful and lovable - another great grace God gives to His missionaries, a grace that fills the soul with intense happiness. The missionary life, the mission itself, the Congregation, the whole Church, seem to blend into one glory of light and life and eternal possession of that Light and Life in the clear vision of it all. Never did I feel happy as I do now - even though I were not to spend six months in Nigeria. At long, long last now that the Holy Rosary Sisters have obtained for me this great favour I feel finally detached from all I ever loved while loving it all with a love more intense than I ever loved it heretofore.

And now to our voyage and my fellow-travellers - there are four priests on board with me: three of the Society of the African Missions, Cork, and one belonging to Father Whitney's Mission, Calabar. They are all very young and very happy. We are of course all together at table and near each other in our cabins. It makes the voyage to be very pleasant indeed. Of the passengers all I know is what I see - they keep very much aloof from us. I don't know any of them except one. Yet they are all very friendly in their own peculiar distant, respectful way! Yet all is different from what it used to be . . . The Captain and officers, stewards, etc. are all charming. There is an altar on board, attended to by the second steward.

The sea has been lumpy, humpy, bumpy, rolly, etc. etc. from the beginning of the voyage. It is difficult to say Mass. There is a crowd on board and consequently very little spare room. The weather so far has been cold and dank - today at last the temperature is changing. Tomorrow we are to be in Madeira.

While I write there is all around a crowd waiting for me to yield place at the writing table. You know what it is to attempt to a letter in such an atmosphere. But you know also that the writing does not really much matter provided we know that the writer and those he is writing to understand each other - understand the sea and those that sail over it.

The sea has lost nothing of its enchantment for me - I spend hours walking up and down the deck looking away out over the horizon, up and down the world my mind roams; and away down the years it travels to those who first sailed over this self-same ocean. (wish they all had known God!) How I now pray that all those who sail over it may know Him - and then my mind stops in Nigeria to go back again to Killeshandra, finally to travel away beyond the stars where we shall all travel once, there to meet and never to be separated - to meet and stay with Our Father in our Father's home.

When I reach Nigeria then will I write to you something more concrete and tangible and personal than what I am now writing.

How I pray for you - all of you who are to sail this same ocean God

knows how many years on your way to Africa and to heaven. May your hearts and souls be replete with heavenly peace and happiness and trust in God during those glorious days of your life. I bless every day the sea over which you are to sail - it is God who is blessing it. It is His own big sea. He will look after his children when they sail over it. He will be with them. And now I have reached the very end of what's in my mind just now. So I leave you as far as writing is concerned - my next letter will be from Nigeria.

Tomorrow, though, I cannot but recall that sunny day years ago when you and I with Dr. Leen got off the ship to have that great drive to the highest point in Madeira - how well I recall every incident of that voyage! We are to spend a few hours at Madeira to land passengers. Won't you remember me to all in the community and to the novices and postulants.²⁵

In spite of the difficulty of writing letters because of the roughness of the sea at the time he made a point of replying to letters received, referring in each case to the individual circumstances before going on to comment on life on the ship and then to soar so spontaneously into more sublime reflections. To Sr Margaret Mary, who had been in St Vincent's Hospital, he wrote on 17 November:

I ask Our Lord to grant you the strength you need to sail down over these seas I now sail over on your way to Nigeria.

There are four priests aboard. That makes the voyage to be very happy. We have several Masses each morning. The ship is rolling so heavily that it is difficult to say mass. There is a particular happiness in saying Mass on board ship. It always reminds me of those voyages of Our Lord over the Sea of Galilee with His apostles. He was a great lover of the sea and boats and fishermen. He loved all the works of his heavenly Father. He gradually gives to each one of His missionaries to see persons and things in the loving, lovable light in which He sees them and loves them. The whole world changes and becomes so beautiful when seen and loved with eyes and heart animated with a soul where God dwells.

Writing on a ship is very difficult - there are people all about talking and laughing and happy. It is hard to forget and shut out such an environment. But walking up and down the deck my thoughts are free to roam the earth and the stars and beyond the stars even - then do I think of Killeshandra and Nigeria - and of St Vincent's Hospital...

The same day he wrote to Sister Gertrude who was attending the teacher training college in Craiglockhart, Scotland, with much the same details about the voyage but again not a carbon copy of the letters he had written to others at the same sitting:

We are near Madeira leaving the cold harsh dark North behind us and entering gradually into the light and heat of the Sunny South.

There are four priests on board so we have a very happy party. They are all quite young and on their way to Nigeria too. My next letter to you will be from Nigeria. Please God, you and many other Sisters will sail down this same sea in a short time and maybe I will have the happiness of meeting you in Nigeria. Meanwhile I have the happiness of praying for you each day - especially at the holy Sacrifice recommending you, one and all in Craiglockhart, Killeshandra, St. Vincent's and Nigeria - to God.

May God bless you on those many voyages, which you in your turn will undertake in fulfilment of your great apostolic vocation. How often I think of Our Lord and His apostles on those voyages of theirs together over the sea of Galilee. Today He is here with His missionaries just as He was with His

apostles. To meet Him each morning at the holy Sacrifice is an ineffable consolation and joy. And to meet him in Nigeria! What a consolation and happiness!

Ever the same living, loving Jesus. Is it any wonder His missionaries are happy. He pours into their hearts and souls His own very happiness: His own very Self each morning at the sacred moment of Communion.

Kindly remember me to each of the Sisters in Craiglockhart. I pray that God may grant you special graces to do the hard but most important work you are now doing in preparation for your active missionary career in Nigeria.

Writing on board a ship is almost impossible, so pardon this illegible, jumble of words and thoughts. At least they will tell you I am ever thinking of and praying for each of you my very dear missionary Sisters...

P.S. As I was leaving Ireland I received a most interesting letter from your great missionary brother in Nigeria. He was ever so well - and now I will call to see him - and so answer his letter.

The slow tempo of the ship's movement and the vast horizon gave Shanahan an added opportunity to view all matters *sub specie aeternitatis* as it were. For many years he felt somewhat removed from the activities and interests of the home Province, and at times felt, as other missionaries did, that the confreres back home were not fully committed to the great work to extend the kingdom of God. Having had an opportunity to see the work being done at home and having lived at close quarters with the people involved, he had profited from his experience. In particular he was very impressed by the new orientation given to the home Province by Dr Dan Murphy since he had been appointed Provincial superior. And now that he hoped he was resuming his work on the missions at least in some small way, he felt he must write to Dr Murphy and show his appreciation for what he was doing. He felt freer now to put in writing some of his hopes for the Irish Province in the years ahead. As happened so often with Shanahan when inspired by a special topic he allowed his pen a free rein:

25 November 1935 The "Adda" is nearing its destination. The voyage for me at any rate has been a voyage of almost perfect happiness. How can I ever thank God for all that he has given to me, given to others, to the Congregation, to the Irish Province, to Nigeria, to Killeshandra. To see Our Lord at work in souls all around me, to see them become gradually but ever progressively more and more like unto Him in the midst of this world and all the combats it means for each, is for me a source of unbounded happiness, and to see all that God has granted to me among multitudes of others for all of whom it is likewise happiness untold.

These are the thoughts that occupy my mind and heart as we sail along coming ever nearer and nearer to my old home in Nigeria.

I am especially grateful to God for the years I have spent in the Irish Province. That stage was of vital importance to me, in one direction more particularly: viz. It has enabled me to see reasonably and impartially the soul of the Irish Provinces as evidenced in its Religious, Priestly and Sacerdotal and Missionary life. I am convinced that the spiritual life and missionary orientation of the Province is most consoling and highly edifying. Great things are in store for the Province because of its fidelity to the Spirit of our great missionary Congregation. It will do great things for God not alone in the almost perfect training of the future missionaries, but also in all its works, the works entrusted to it by God at home and in Missionary lands.

I now know that Ireland is heart and soul with the Missions, is just equally as missionary and as apostolic-minded as the Missions. And as the years pass this will become more and more evident - the union of heart and soul between Ireland and its missions. When the missionaries on their side see and realise that this is the truth concerning Ireland a great source of irritation will have been removed from the missioner's mind.

It is astounding that people like us don't understand and acknowledge the efforts of the demon to divide us by making us distrust each other. This want of trust and mutual confidence in each other and in our leaders is fatal to the true Christlike spirit among us. We have much leeway to make up in this direction - and I would go so far as to say that the missionaries will have to alter their attitude towards their Province and its government if they are to retain the blessing of God on their missionary work.

And now I come to thank you as Provincial of Ireland for what you have done to bring about this happy state of affairs. All this was symbolised in that gathering of all the Superiors of the Province - the Provincial at their head - to bid bon voyage to the missionaries in the person of an old missionary on the occasion of my departure for the missions - and as such I thank you and the whole Irish Province from the very depths of my heart. I will leave nothing undone to bring Nigeria to see the truth as I did and feel and experience it where the Irish Province is concerned. That we may all be in truth "*Cor unum et Anima una.*"

I thank you too for that grand letter you wrote to me on the eve of my departure. To make my happiness complete where the union of Ireland with the missions is concerned, I would like to see you in the missions as soon as you can possibly manage to come. I believe this visit of the Irish Provincial would set the seal to the new united spirit and heart of Ireland with its missions. This is of paramount importance for on it depends progress - the great virtue of Charity on which all the rest of the spiritual edifice depends - for union with God and with each other.

Finally I thank you for having invited me back to the Province in case I am not wanted in Nigeria. There is no small consolation in knowing that one is welcome among one's own wherever they may be.

My desire would be to end my days in Nigeria - but I absolutely subordinate this desire to God's holy will. And if I am to return to Ireland it will be to continue wholeheartedly the little I can do for an Irish Missionary Province.

Now a little request: it is that you would take a special interest in Killeshandra. They will need to feel with them the Holy Ghost Congregation and particularly the Irish Province. God will repay you for anything you can do for them, spiritually and temporally. Dr Leen has been a heaven-sent spiritual director to them. His great book on mental prayer will now give or rather open to others the gateway that leads to the enchantments of the spiritual life.

Fr P. Heerey has done exceptionally good work there too - a model priest and religious and missionary.

I have become attached to my charming confreres in Clareville and Blackrock. How much I needed the spiritual tonic of their grand example and great fraternal charity God alone knows. I thank God for every hour I spent in Ireland.

Now I had not intended to write anything of what I have written so far but since the inspiration came when I sat down before those sheets of papers I followed

it.

I must end up by wishing you a very happy Christmas and Holy New Year. And may I wish also to have the pleasure of greeting you on your arrival in Nigeria!²⁶

Bishop Shanahan had learned many lessons from his close contact with the home province of the Congregation. He realised more fully that without the dedicated service of many people at home there could be no real missionary work abroad. As he tried to single out one particular person to write to who represented this great body of workers he picked on Fr Nicholas O'Loughlin, Superior of Kimmage Manor. After having served for some years on the "Mission Band" in the USA he was recalled to join the team working for the missions at home. He had given dedicated service as Dr Shanahan had the opportunity of seeing at close hand.

In his letter to Fr O'Loughlin, which was published in the *Missionary Annals*, he began as follows:

Each morning as I offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on the "Adda" I besought Our Divine Lord to grant special graces to those who at home in Ireland make it possible for the Holy Ghost Missionary Society to educate an even greater number of missionary students to be ordained for the African missions...

Africa is crying out to Ireland as to all other countries where the Catholic Church is established to come to her assistance in her dire distress. Missionaries, more and more missionaries, are needed, missionaries well educated and profoundly spiritual; ready to give their life for Africa in order to bring Africa to Jesus Christ. Within the last fifty years much has been done, but in comparison with what souls are still enshrouded in the dark horror of paganism this "much" seems almost small as a drop in the ocean. But with good, fervent, zealous missionary priests and Sisters wonders may be wrought...

These are the thoughts that occupy and distress me as I sail on ever nearer and nearer to a land and a people I love. For an old missionary the greatest happiness in his life is to be able to see once again and, if possible, end his days among those spiritual children that he loves with an intense love, with a love granted to him by Jesus Christ, to be a very participation of Christ's own love for those self-same souls. All comes from and goes back to Jesus Christ, but the missionary, too, has a place in God's plan for the transmission of divine life, just as the father and mother have for the transmission of natural life.

Having paid tribute to the dedicated work of the Sisters he goes on to thank the parents who have generously parted with their sons and daughters:

I will be able to tell them all that the Irish are doing their part generously – ready to give not alone financial aid but to give their own very flesh and blood in their beloved sons and daughters. What a gift that is to give...

So I pray in a very special manner for the fathers and mothers who give this sublime gift to God...But later when the great reunion takes place above in heaven what joy will be there not be when the missionaries and their parents meet each other in God's Holy Presence.²⁷

After these inspiring outpourings ranging from Ireland to Africa, from earth to heaven, as the 'Adda' neared its destination Shanahan's euphoric happiness suddenly deserted him. Instead he was filled with dark feelings of depression and foreboding. He began to doubt if he had done the right thing in going back to the scene of his

labours. The reception or the lack of it as he stepped ashore seemed to confirm his doubts. Scarcely anyone turned up. All happened to be attending an important function that evening. But once the news spread that Bishop Shanahan was among them again everything changed.

Reporting at the time for the *Missionary Annals* on the events connected with the great jubilee celebrations one of the missionaries began his factual account with the arrival of the various dignitaries as follows:

Well, the Jubilee began at Port Harcourt with the arrival of Dr. Shanahan. To say he got wonderful reception is to put it mildly. Bishop, priests, nuns, rich and poor turned out to see and pay homage to their grand old Father in Christ. He lunched with us, and then proceeded up country with Mgr. Heerey. Before he went he visited the Sisters and was amazed at their progressive pace. Calling at Aba, passed the night at Emekuku. Here the hospital and convent school were there to astonish him. The next day via Ihiala he arrived at Onitsha. Here he was met by a guard of honour, four deep, over a mile long. Talk about enthusiasm—the Irish weren't in it! Since Shanahan's last visit here the place has grown—a new secondary school and seminary, Fr Doyle's church, the teachers' house, built by Fr. O'Donoghue, and the Cathedral itself.

Writing much later with the benefit of hindsight and trying to depict the significance of the events Sr Rosarii Comer of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary gave her personal view of what followed:

There was a wonderful reception prepared for him - Bishop, clergy and laity combined efforts to make his return a memorable one. When in company with Bishop Heerey, he came some miles outside Onitsha he was met by a 'carcade', the Holy Trinity Brass Band leading, the roads were lined with people; banners and scrolls spelled out the welcome enshrined in the hearts of all his beloved Igbo people. Their brightest and best robes were displayed and the regalia of the Chiefs, both pagan and Christian lent splendour to the occasion. He blessed the people as was his wont while the car moved on slowly through the crowd. Nearing the Mission, he saw hundreds of school boys and girls, the latter wearing their white dresses and blue head-ties. The great increase in their numbers gladdened his heart - were not these the 'Apostles' whom he had seen in vision and whose role would be to bring Christ and His Good News to their own kith and kin in the pagan homes of Nigeria? He likened them to a field of bluebells and hoped that these 'bluebells' would spread throughout the length and breadth not only of Nigeria but of the great Continent of Africa and transform its heart until it was one with Christ's.

As the carcade proceeded up the Mango Avenue to the Waterside Mission house where Fathers from the outlying stations and all the Sisters had gathered to meet him, he saw the newly-built Cathedral with its magnificent spire and rose-window - and the flights of steps that rose up to it from the lordly Niger at the very point where fifty years before the first Holy Ghost Fathers were marooned.

His dream had become reality at last - in his own lifetime - "How good God is" was his repeated remark. But it was the people who were gathered there that received most attention - his 'fellow-Missionaries'. Father Joe Delaney, who had volunteered to share his Missionary activities in the dim past - who had worked successively as teacher, carpenter, builder and who was finally

ordained priest by Bishop Broderick SMA, still bearing the burden and the heat of the day on the banks of the Niger. Fathers Pat Doyle and Charlie O'Donoghue who had generously offered their services as teachers in his first effort at Higher Education in Igbariam while studying for the priesthood themselves. Father J. Anyogwu, the first and only Igbo of a long line of followers he had the privilege of raising to the priesthood. Then there were others no less dear to the Bishop - Peter and Paul whom he had brought down from the north as boys and who had grown old in rendering faithful and tireless service as mason and carpenter in all the Churches, Convents or Mission houses - were they not Brother Baldomir's right-hand men in raising this beautiful Cathedral to the glory of God on the banks of the Niger? They were there with their wives and families amongst a host of others to welcome back to his old home Father they all loved. His joy was unbounded but there were also tears - tears of joy mingled with the feeling of the future inevitable separation from all he loved.

On the 8th of December, feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Blessed Mother, he blessed the newly-built Cathedral. Clothed in cope and mitre, his noble bearing lent added dignity to the occasion as he went around the walls, outside of which thousands of people were gathered, blessing the building from which praise and thanksgiving were to rise to our Heavenly Father for generations to come.

How few of us present then, and least of all Bishop Shanahan himself, thought that one day his mortal remains would be encased before that same altar on which he offered the first Mass in the Cathedral. On Christmas Night, he sang the Mass at Midnight and gave Holy Communion to the vast crowds with the aid of a number of priests who assisted. When Midnight Mass was over, he said his other two Masses immediately and then knelt in prayer as was his custom before returning to the Mission.

He spent most of Christmas Day 1935 with us in Onitsha Convent. By this time, his health had shown definite signs of deterioration. Though he was quite ill that day, he made little of his illness, saying it was "an old heart condition" and it would soon pass off. His whole aim was to be with us and make the day a happy one for us - at what expense to himself, only God knows. He went to visit one of our Sisters who was extremely ill and unable to get up over a long period. Whenever he said Mass in the Convent, he brought her Holy Communion and as Sacristan and Infirmarian, it was my great privilege to accompany him - it was an experience which stands out very vividly in my memory over the years and for which I owe great gratitude to God. The sacredness of the occasion was palpable in his deep recollection and reverence as he bore the Blessed Sacrament from the Chapel to Sister's room, while the radiance of his countenance showed something more than faith - something closer to vision as he gave the Sacred Host to the sick Sister, having spent some time on that Christmas Day, chatting with her and consoling her, he gave her a special blessing, assuring her that she would soon be well. We all noticed that after that day she showed the first signs of improvement and before he left the country - in less than a month after - she was able to join us again and take part in the work.

By this time, many remarks made in the Bishop's hearing and many incidents (which I do not think the time opportune to recount here) occurred which gave him good reason to believe that his visit was longer than desired...²⁸

A brief but poignant quotation from another witness, his former secretary in Nigeria, Sr Philomena Fox, reveals to us how Bishop Shanahan really felt on this climactic occasion:

Sometime in January 1936, Nigeria's first bishop and great apostle prepared to leave his beloved Iboland for the last time. He offered Mass at Port Harcourt the morning of departure. Reading the last gospel his voice faltered. When he came to the words, "He came unto his own and his own received him not", a sob escaped him and he could not go on, but left the altar hurriedly to hide his tears...²⁹

As Shanahan stopped over at Lagos before bidding good-bye to Nigeria forever on 21 January 1936 he tried to put his own thoughts on paper in a lengthy letter personally addressed to Sr Catherine as one to whom he felt he could speak his mind freely while leaving it to her to communicate his message to all the Sisters in Nigeria. After giving some details about the events of the departure he moves on to reflect on what the apostolate really means and what part God is calling him henceforth to play in that apostolate:

21 January 1936

"On our way to exile in Ireland"

My dear Sister M Catherine

Here I am comfortably seated at a writing table in this very hospitable missionary and episcopal house where every missionary and every Irishman feels that he is heartily welcome and is considered as one of the religious family.

The bishop himself in his motor car was down to meet the Apapa at 5 pm yesterday. The boat came in late but his Vic. General, Rev Fr Cahill was there to meet us when we arrived at 6 pm. We were taken off at once: Mother General and Mother Peter to St Mary's Convent; Fr McAllister of the Glen and myself to the Bishop's house. There was such a warm welcome for all of us that we were and are quite at home among our own in the Catholic Mission, Lagos. And now a few words about our little party on the Apapa. The soothing effect of being 'rocked in the cradle of the deep' combined with the effect of Father McAllister's delightful stories brought a welcome relief to what had become a strain that caused actual physical pain, let alone that other more intimate pain that wrings heart and soul, the pain of being separated from those one loves. To be separated from God! How infinitely awful it must be! Since even the pale shadow of its shadow here on earth is a torture!

And all the time in the depths of our souls there was a sense of ineffable peace and profound gratitude to God, for every little twinge of pain and sorrow was directly associated with and caused by God's love in each and all of us. All is for Him, that He may be known and loved at the expense of our whole life. It is heavenly to feel that in actual reality we are having some small little share in the sufferings of Jesus Christ our Loving Divine Saviour. And that each of our sufferings will bear fruits of life - Divine Life and Love, in the souls of our African children.

We did not say a single word about Nigeria, not even about your own selves! - but God knows how our thoughts and minds and hearts were one with you away beyond the fringe of palms in the sweltering heat of Nigeria. And how we wished we could have remained there with you offering up with you the total sacrifice of our whole selves with you united to our beloved Jesus for poor Africa, for Nigeria - God wills us elsewhere. His holy will be done.

There is a sense of profound family ‘pride’ - if I dare us the word in its best sense, in the thought that those we love are doing and living the most heroic life it is possible for the ‘sons’ of God to live on earth - a life of slow martyrdom for Christ and his African children - but the knife that sacrifices the victims in this as in the case of all martyrdom, is the Flame of God’s Living Love, the Holy Ghost.

Today the feast of St Agnes, recalls all this in that most beautiful Office and Mass where the glories of martyrdom and virginity are sung, inspired by the Holy Spirit of Love.

Thus it is that our thoughts, our wishes, our prayers, while embracing you here on earth are gently lifted up to that self-same Spirit away beyond the confines of Nigeria; away beyond the glory of star, sun and moon, to our home above with our Heavenly Father in Heaven.

That letter you wrote to me - a letter delivered to me on the ‘High Sea’ by Rev Mother General - stirred up in my heart those sentiments the overflow of which I cannot keep from flowing on to you, through the medium of these few sheets of paper. And while I write I can see you still, see you with the Bishop, the Sisters and priests, as you all stood on the burning red clay of Nigeria, while we moved away over the cool waters on our way to exile in so-called comfort in Ireland - Ireland now become a place of exile for African missionaries.

The few weeks in Nigeria had been so short! While holy Providence has granted us the happiness of meeting again in Africa - in Nigeria - yet in a very definite way God insisted on our ordinary natural sentiments and arrangements being brushed aside so that this final purification of our innermost affections should take place in order that we might become more and more like unto the Living Image of his own Jesus - our Jesus too - since he has given him to us - all that, in order that we may have all the greater happiness and glory in heaven where we will all meet - and so soon - time is so short.

Much as I would have liked to revisit Ogui’s Hills, I liked infinitely more your own decision to sacrifice that legitimate hour of pleasure to something infinitely higher: to the pleasure of giving God pleasure in depriving yourself of your own pleasure. In doing this, far from causing me pain, you filled my heart with added confidence in and admiration for the heart and soul that has now definitely surrendered all to The One and only Lover: to Jesus Christ.

On my side it was quite evident from the moment I set foot in Nigeria that my visit was to be one that would bring me great supernatural happiness - on one condition; the final and definite shattering of all natural attachments and affection for, and pride in, even persons and matters that I had thought purely supernatural. I did not know there was so much of my natural self in all the activities of my being!

So I thank God in a most special manner for my short visit to Nigeria. Never before had I such absolute confidence in the success of the mission and in the success of the Missionary Sisters as powerful co-operators in the apostolate, for the Holy Spirit is subjecting Nigeria -and perhaps more especially its missionary sisters - to the fiery ordeal of the Cross in its manifold forms.

Now that I have a more direct and intimate knowledge of your own souls on those rare occasions when, for a moment, drawing aside the screen that conceals them from all but the eye of God you permitted me just to get a glimpse of them. For this I am indeed grateful.

Following your example I will endeavour to surrender all to that one great Lover, Jesus Christ. The thought of you in Nigeria will encourage me to carry into effect this resolve. If I do, I know that God will allow me to continue to participate more intensely in the great work of the apostolate - heart and soul with Our Lord and His Blessed Mother, and by that fact, heart and soul with you who are '*cor unum et anima una*' with Jesus and Mary and each other.

There is less danger than ever of my interference in the religious life of the Congregation at home or in Africa. My co-operation with the Congregation at home and in Nigeria lies exclusively in prayer. In that field God wants me to carry out what little remains to me of my share in the Apostolate. There I will hamper nobody, misdirect nobody. In this thought, in this new conviction I find security, peace, consolation. By prayer, the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, the acceptance of whatever crosses life in its last lap holds in store for me, I can continue to be a missionary even in Ireland. But all will be for you - the most beautiful fruits of my missionary life in Africa. I have now reached what must be the last page of this strange letter where in spite of all the resolutions there is so much of 'self'. Time and again the thought came to me to destroy it and write you just the usual formless, soulless letter where there would be no manifestation of heart or mind, of pain or of joy... No - I won't destroy it. I'll send it on to you - but I would ask you to use your own discretion as to whether it would not be better to destroy it once you have read it...

You and the Sisters left nothing undone to make my stay in Nigeria stand out among many happy days in Africa as the happiest of all - through you I have come nearer to God - and because of you I return to Ireland with God's Holy Light, God's Holy Peace, brighter and more intense than ever before in my soul.

There is only one thought could possibly cause me real pain, it is that you might for a moment believe that you were not for me what you wished to be - for you were all that a hundred times over and above it; or that I did not quite understand how and why it was that you did not do more for me - won't you once and for all banish that thought from your mind.

I have an ever-deepening love and reverence and admiration along with unbounded confidence and trust in you and in each and all of the Missionary Sisters of Our lady of the Holy Rosary.

God bless you, my very dear Sister M Catherine - God bless all the Sisters - all in Nigeria.

Ever with you in the Loving Heart of Christ

A PS after all I have written! Well, it is to tell you that I hadn't confidence enough in myself to stay on and give the last Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and my last blessing to you and the Sisters in Port Harcourt. I also thought it better the Bishop should do that. A little sacrifice such as I witnessed you and the Sisters offering time and again to God. I know God will have accepted and blessed it for you.

Poor Mother Matthias was not to blame. I did it, and did it intentionally, for I did not feel strong enough to face the ordeal of a final goodbye to you. A final farewell to Nigeria. That also will explain why we came so late to the Apapa.

It seemed cruel and selfish on my part. Won't you and all forgive me? ³⁰

With regard to his state of health on leaving Nigeria Shanahan was to write two months later as he reflected at length on the lessons learned by him from the whole episode:

15 March 1936. You remember that heart trouble I had in Onitsha? Well it was not the heart itself but some thing else that was causing the trouble. Whatever it was it continued on till about five days from Liverpool. I was feeling it getting worse and worse. One day at last, something gave way. Whether it was an abscess on the liver I don't know, but it burst at all events. For the first time in my life - often as I have been at death's door- I felt like passing away during that final crisis. It has taken me all the time since to get back to normal. I think I am very well back now. Was it not providential after all that I did not stay in Nigeria?

My mind is working again today, also my will is gaining some power, for it had deteriorated badly.

For all this I am grateful to God - grateful for everything - and I'd say most of all for my last journey to Nigeria, with the inevitable strain.

P. S.- A P.S. After all I have written - Well, it is to tell you that I had not confidence enough in myself to stay on and give the last Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and my last blessing to you and the Sisters in Port Harcourt. Also I thought it better the Bishop should do that. A little sacrifice such as I witnessed you and the Sisters offering time and again to God. I know God will have accepted and blessed it for you. I did it and did it intentionally, for I did not feel strong enough to face the ordeal of a final good-bye to you - or a final farewell to Nigeria - it seemed cruel and selfish on my part. Won't you forgive me?³¹

Shanahan's arrival back in Blackrock on 7 February must have been a very low-key affair. The community journalist has this brief entry: "Rt. Rev. Dr Shanahan arrived from Africa. There was coffee (only) after dinner." He returned quietly to his room in Clareville, which had been reserved for him in case he should not remain on in Nigeria. The winter's cold must soon have helped him to realise that his Nigeria dream was over - that it was full retirement this time. Writing on St Patrick's Day to Sr Veronica in Nigeria he had this to say about the weather: "The weather here has been very very unpleasant. But now, today, Spring is with us. The blackbirds and thrushes are breaking their little hearts singing, leading the grand chorus of the bird world praising God, morning, noon and evening. It is their welcome to the Sun on its journey Northwards."

To Sr Rosarii he wrote on the same day:

When I think of you out in Nigeria I say my prayers better and cease to find fault with the cold Winter. Have I not a fine fire here with leisure galore to read and pray while in Africa you are bearing the burden of the apostolate in sweltering heat without ever a grumble, but ever with a heart full of gratitude to God that you are in Nigeria.

In his efforts to be of assistance to the Missionary Sisters whom he had seen in action in Nigeria there was one form of apostolate Shanahan engaged in during the months ahead, namely the many inspiring letters he sent them - letters that were invariably treasured. Though he deliberately kept very much to the religious and inspirational level in these letters he occasionally gives details about his own activities and states of mind that he feels might be of interest to the Sisters and which certainly are now very helpful in plotting the course of his life in "retirement". On one occasion he wrote:

I might write differently and mention nothings, about matters that don't matter for time and eternity, but I thought that writing to a fellow-missionary in the midst of God's warfare in Africa, I would first write of the realities to be met by soldiers fighting a desperate battle where tremendous interests are at stake -

the eternal interests of God's glory, to be realised in the eternal salvation of souls, to be won by Christ living and working and suffering in the members of his Mystical Body with you in Nigeria - and a vital part of it too....For Christ will continue to be crucified in us, and we in him, till the last soul is saved. Then, and only then, time shall cease and heaven for all God's elect, for the complete Christ begins.³²

Though no longer able to participate in active missionary work himself he delighted to get news of the achievements of his former colleagues in Nigeria. We find him referring to such recent news in a letter to Mother General on 20 November 1936:

Since my return to Ireland God has done much to fix me up for the journey home and for - thanks to His mercy and Our Blessed Mother Mary's intercession - a landing on the right side when the passage is over. It is only now I begin to see and understand how beautifully God arranges things and circumstances that are best for each of us even though He has done already so much for us in making us His missionary co-operators in Africa.

So poor Sister Veronica's mother has been called away to heaven. What a great welcome she will get there, for has she not a daughter in Africa - this fact will add to her glory in heaven.

And the Ihiala Convent is completed and occupied! What good news. Poor old Father Bindel will be at this moment one of the happiest missionaries in Nigeria. He has faithfully done the work God gave him to do and made it perfect in building such a beautiful home for the Children of Mary - the Sisters and her daughters, the Missionary Sisters of Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary. The clinic he took such pride in now at last beautifully arranged for, since the Sisters are taking it over.

How well I remember - long, long years ago - that first visit to the then dangerous country of Ihiala. Father Bindel was with me.

There were no roads, no bridges except a tie-tie contraption over the "Mbassi" and of course no Catholic station - not a single Catholic individual even - and today!... You will remember our last visit to the new convent! .

For all those glorious visions God has given to His missionary priests and sisters in Nigeria - visions of His own self in the souls of His African children - aye and in our own poor souls too...Oh, how good God is! If only all the world could see and know and love Him as we have in Nigeria.³³

As time went on Shanahan's recollections of Nigeria may have tended to become more idealised but his consciousness of God's overall presence in human hearts and in the world they live in became more pronounced. We get glimpses of these two attitudes in a letter he wrote to a Sister for her feast day:

9 April 1937: "You remember how we would feel our hearts throb with heavenly joy at that vision of earthly beauty - a sunset over the Niger, or the rising of the moon over the palm-clad hills of Onitsha, Abagana, Enugu, or even Owerri! Unerringly our very hearts were wont to open up on those occasions to that other vision - that vision of faith, hidden behind the glorious mantle of gold, purple, azure blue and grey that hid him, it is true, from our bodily eyes but not from the eyes of our divinised hearts.

All my recollections of Nigeria are like those glorious scenes we so often witnessed together. They are part of my life. Something sacramental, belonging to two worlds; to heaven as well as to earth; to eternity more even than to time. How I thank God for this great grace. More than ever - I feel - to speak of my own personal impression, these emotions common I believe to all

those who leave all for God. I feel that God leaves us in contact with all, along with his own living, loving, divine self. One of the sources of purest happiness in my life as a missionary flows from the consciousness of this reality in my own heart - and - I am going to add - even more so - from the consciousness, aye even the knowledge of the presence of this reality in the hearts of those I love on earth; my fellow missionaries, priests and sisters in Nigeria. When I see the intense love you have for our heavenly Father and for his children in Nigeria, my heart overflows with joy.³⁴

'Recollection' in Rockwell

The Provincial, Fr Dan Murphy, had written to Dr Shanahan as he set out for Nigeria assuring him that if he was not wanted there he would be very welcome back again in Ireland. Shanahan said then that, though his own desire would be to end his days in Nigeria, he would be glad to return to Ireland if that was God's will and "to continue to do wholeheartedly the little I can do for the Irish Missionary province." He had promised while doing the 'Recollection' in Chevilly in August 1935 that he would try to promote the launch of such an exercise in Ireland. When he broached this topic with the Provincial he must have found that he was pushing an open door, and it was quite natural that, as he spoke of his own experience in Chevilly, he was invited to conduct the first such recollection in Ireland the following August.

Shanahan had found that his French confreres had taken enthusiastically to the concept of such a spiritual reunion or think-in. The majority of them were on holidays from the various missions and were delighted with the prospect of meeting confreres they had not met for years and with comparing their missionary experiences in surroundings that were familiar to them all. Many of the Irish confreres would be from the various works at home, especially the schools, so they would not have as much in common with the missionaries and would have little inclination to discuss school matters. And as Rockwell was the venue chosen there would be little opportunity at that time to go on 'pilgrimages' of the type that provided a relieving break at Chevilly. A lot then would depend on the director of the Recollection in Rockwell to fuse the participants into a cohesive motivated group. It was a challenge for Shanahan, but as usual he had no hesitation in accepting. He had the advantage of having recently participated in such an exercise, and he had a copy of the printed notes of the conferences given on that occasion by Père Jules Remy. That he worked over his conferences and made out his own notes is obvious from the manuscript which has survived.

In his letters to various people at the time, he made passing references to the fact that he was preparing retreats for priests e.g. "I begin to find the giving of retreats to priests the most useful of spiritual works for my own soul - God has arranged that too; once again how good he is." Another passing reference reads as follows: "I am here as usual in my little hermitage in Clareville, working away, reading books I love, preparing for retreats...that I don't love...naturally speaking, but I do love as a missionary and priest for they keep me in contact with all that is most beautiful, most consoling - in touch with him who is Eternal Life, Eternal Beauty, Eternal love.. Are not Dr Leen's books beautiful?"³⁵

In fact Shanahan was to be very busy that summer. The first major engagement renewed his memories of his active years in Nigeria. In May he received an invitation from Fr Paul Biechy to act as co-ordinating prelate at his episcopal ordination on 4 June in Saverne in Alsace. Fr Biechy had served for years in Anwa in Nigeria before being appointed Master of Novices in the large Brothers' novitiate in Chevilly. Now

he was appointed by Rome as Vicar Apostolic of Brazzaville in the French Congo. This particular engagement must have given special pleasure to Shanahan as it took place in Saverne, the birthplace of the Venerable Libermann. It also afforded him the opportunity to spend a few days in Germany. Having visited Knechsteden he met Fr Nepomucene Muller whom he had known well as the teacher in charge of music in Rockwell at the turn of the century. In spite of his ill-health Fr Muller insisted on taking Dr Shanahan on a tour of the houses of the Congregation in Germany.

He then headed for Fribourg in Switzerland where the Irish senior scholastics were attending the university as part of one of Dr Dan Murphy's initiatives to give the Irish Province a new impetus. He conferred minor orders on a number of the senior scholastics there. The Irish students were delighted to have Shanahan in their midst, just as they had the pleasure of having his friend Bishop John O'Gorman who was spending his final years there in retirement. He spoke freely with them and when one congratulated him on having returned to Nigeria he was surprised to hear Shanahan say: "That was a mistake: I should never have gone back once I had left." On a brighter note he told them he had enjoyed reading a book he had picked up at Saverne, *La vie des Abeilles*, a semi-scientific book about the life of a bee by Maurice Maeterlinck. When someone reminded him that the book was on the Index of forbidden books he laughed heartily at the oversight that allowed him to enjoy the book! The Superior, Père Jean Bondallaz, who was very impressed by Dr Shanahan, suggested to him that he might also consider living in retirement with them in the senior house of studies. Knowing that Dr Murphy had a busy schedule lined up for him in Ireland Dr Shanahan declined. He travelled to Bouveret where he addressed the students in the juniorate. The journalist there informs us that they were all very impressed by the enthusiasm with which he spoke about the missions and by his simplicity. He travelled to nearby Montana where he had previously been in 1927 to visit his nephew Michael Dawson who was suffering from tuberculosis. The main purpose of his visit now was to confer minor orders on some students and perform one ordination to the priesthood. He then returned to Ireland.³⁶

We get some idea of his busy schedule during the following weeks from the letters he wrote in the next few weeks. First to Mother General of the Holy Rosary Sisters:

18 July 1936 On Sunday last - the glorious twelfth - some 200 pilgrims from Belfast arrived in Dublin on their way to Lisieux. Their director, Rev. Father Crossin, was good enough to ask me to join them. In this way I was privileged in being a member of the first pilgrimage to leave Ireland for Lisieux, and for Lisieux alone.

We reached London on Monday morning, all went to the cathedral where holy Mass was celebrated for the pilgrims. Then the crossing over to France - and such a crossing! The sea was at its worst in shape and form and action, so bad was it that almost all on board the steamer were ill and very ill. Some few thought, aye even wished and prayed, that the boat would sink and so end that inexplicable but excruciating sense of impending disaster which afflicts all sufferers from the effects of an angry sea. This was the harsh way the pilgrims were prepared for those three very happy days that were to follow in Lisieux itself. The weather was beautiful all the time. There were many religious exercises in common each day entailing no small hardship, because the Hotel des Pelerins happened to be far from the Carmelite Convent and further still from the new Basilica.

The priests and lady leaders of the Apostolic work were privileged in

being allowed to speak to Rev. Mother Prioress (Pauline), Sr. M. Thérèse's sister, but the screen was not drawn.

Each day there was solemn High Mass. All the singing was done by a choir of girls, members of the pilgrimage. They sang beautifully with that ring of sincerity, conviction, faith and love that visibly moved like sentiments in the hearts of all those present at the religious ceremonies.

The pilgrimage was in reality a three days retreat not to be forgotten by those who took part in it. Each evening at 3 o'clock, there was Vespers followed by Benediction and Procession of the Blessed Sacrament. The *Adoro Te* we so often heard and loved to hear in Killeshandra and Nigeria, was brilliantly, because so proudly, rendered by the choir with the whole body of pilgrims. The procession was followed by a sermon. Later on, at 6 p.m., there was Benediction again in the Carmelite monastery. Masses were said each morning at the shrine and at the "Bouissonets" home of the St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus.

On the feast of Mount Carmel, Pontifical High Mass was celebrated in the crypt of the Basilica.

There was not a single hour given to sight-seeing. All was spent as at a retreat. From my own personal experience I can say that pilgrimages conducted as this one was cannot but be a source of exceptional graces as well as the occasion of receiving from God countless graces for self and for others. The heart being so well prepared it is no wonder that heaven enters very much into these few passing days of almost heavenly bliss; the memory of those days with the effects produced by them in the soul will help during those dark, dreary, lonely days when the light of heaven seems to go out in the soul.

All the pilgrims felt lonely yesterday (Friday morning) as they said good-bye to Lisieux and to the saint who has now made it so famous. This morning we landed in Dunlaoghaire.

I hasten to let you know that in all my Masses you had a place of honour - two Masses were offered up for the intentions of the Congregation in Ireland and in Nigeria. Last Sunday before leaving Dublin I wrote you a hurried note telling you that I was accompanying the pilgrims to Lisieux.

On Friday next, I accompany another pilgrimage, to Lough Derg this time. I will pray for your intentions and for the intentions of the Congregation during these three days of penance and prayer. I will offer two of my three Masses for the special intentions of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady, Queen of the Holy Rosary.

On the first of August, the retreat or recollection covering three weeks begins. I am to conduct that. Will you be good enough to recommend the retreat to the prayers of all the Sisters in Killeshandra, that each member of the retreat may obtain from God the numerous graces God in His loving goodness means to bestow on each and all if only each one of us do our part - the part consisting chiefly in clearing the way for God's divine action in the soul.

I was very pleased to learn from your letter, which I received on my arrival here this morning that all in Killeshandra and out of it on business bent are well.

P.S.-There were 14 priests as pilgrims - there were many schoolteachers among whom was Miss Hogan, leader of the choir.

Of course Mrs McCall was there with all her lieutenants - one and all were most edifying. Lisieux: ecclesiastical, religious and civil, was very much

impressed - and said so - by the exceptional piety, so soul-inspiring, of the pilgrims. "Won't you come again" was the wish and prayer and goodbye addressed by all, to the pilgrims.³⁷

Writing from Rockwell on 12 August again to Mother General, Dr Shanahan gives a passing glimpse of how the Recollection was progressing:

I expect to be with you on August 28th for the holy Profession. It is true we will be on retreat in Blackrock, until the following day, but I will manage to go up for the ceremony and return immediately it is over. Will you be so good as to let me know the hour - also whether Mass is celebrated - if it is I would like to do that too as it is such an important part of the beautiful ceremony.

The month's recollection or retreat here in Rockwell is a time of exceptional peace, prayer, hard work for all of us. The grand days of our novitiate and ordination day are recalled - and our spiritual, religious and sacerdotal missionary life re-set to the standards put before us in the Person of Christ and His Mystical Body.

After three weeks here, we all go to Blackrock for the fourth and final week when a new conductor takes over charge of the retreat.

I am very well and very happy doing whatever little bit of work God in His goodness and mercy asks me to do. Since He has detached me from all else, I find great peace in putting my whole life into this bit of work to the exclusion of all else, since God so wills it. I hear nothing but good news of Killeshandra. You are now as ever with me in that one Divine, Living Love of Jesus which unites us so profoundly to God and to each other.³⁸

In the absence of 'pilgrimages' to local shrines, no convenient transport being available, boating on the Rockwell lake provided a meditative distraction. A splendid snapshot from the period shows Dr Shanahan and a confreire enjoying the experience.

A person who accompanied Bishop Shanahan on one of his three pilgrimages to Lough Derg recalled an embarrassing incident. The Rector got annoyed one night as some pilgrims were slow in coming into the church - preferring to linger making loud conversation at the back of the church. He announced in a loud and reproving tone that he was not going to start his talk until those laggards came right up into the church. Bishop Shanahan happened to be beside the group and he led the way in his bare feet walking up the centre. All were edified by his humility seeing him as the innocent victim!

That first Recollection retreat at Rockwell must have gone well as Dr Murphy asked Shanahan to repeat the exercise the following year. As he was preparing his conferences for this second Recollection and other retreats he wrote on 5 May 1937 to Mother General:

Since my return to Clareville after that grand Easter spent with you in Killeshandra, I have settled down to work very hard reading for and in and round about those retreats I am to give. In the middle of July I am to conduct the retreat of the Fathers of the English Province, Castlehead. That is to be followed by the August retreat recollection for the Irish Province and missionaries back in Ireland. In between, I'm to lead a pilgrimage to Lough Derg as last year.

I have the happiness of being able to offer up to our divine Lord for the Congregation of the Holy Rosary Sisters whatever merits, if any, it will please God to grant me on the occasion of the conducting of those retreats and the pilgrimage. As a matter of fact long ago I have offered up for that self-same intention my life with the few good and meritorious works divine grace

enables me to perform or live...

The happiest days of my life as a missionary were spent in the depths of the African bush...but never did I feel lonely there. In Ireland one does - that too is part of God's loving plan to prepare us for that last grand glorious voyage through the infinite starry spaces that heavenly created "bush" that lies between earth and heaven...³⁹

In his next letter to the Mother General written in Rockwell on 20 August 1937 he informs her that he intended to make a flying visit to Cork the following day with Fr John McCarthy, Superior of Rockwell, to see the missionary exhibition in which the Holy Rosary Sisters were involved.⁴⁰

Referring to the Recollection itself he wrote:

My three weeks retreat here in Rockwell concluded today...happy man I am to have this work done. Yet it is a glorious work. And our young and old missionaries are fine fellows. They were as good as the best novices only could be - that made things easy for me.

Today they were lonely as they left their "Second Novitiate" for Blackrock where the fourth week of the Recollection is to take place next week, after the consecration of the new Bishop, Most Rev. Dr Ambrose Kelly of Freetown. Next week I will do my retreat with them...⁴¹

Among the other retreats he was asked to give was one to the St Patrick's Missionary Society at Kiltegan with whose founding he had been closely involved while in Nigeria. He felt indisposed at the time and thought that he might not be able to go ahead but in the event he succeeded and said that he returned cured of his ailment. The Sisters in Liverpool, who had befriended him and the Holy Rosary Sisters as they were preparing to board the ship for Nigeria, were delighted when they heard that he was willing to preach their annual retreat in October 1936 but in the event he was laid low by one of his recurring tropical illnesses, which also prevented him from assisting at the laying of the foundation stone of the new Senior Seminary in Kimmage. On that occasion he wrote to the Provincial, Dr Dan Murphy, apologising for his inability to attend either event:

26 October 1936: "You have written to me very kind letters recently inviting me to the memorable ceremonies of the laying of the foundation stone of the Grand new Seminary at Kimmage...I did not answer your letters. Neither did I attend the foundation stone ceremonies. I know that you will make allowance for both deficiencies on my part. Until the last moment I wished to go to Kimmage but wise counsellors insisted on my accepting the warnings given me by own state of health - by the Doctor and Rev. Father Superior - all telling me not to attempt to do what I was unfit physically to do. That alone explains my absence if not the absence of a letter from me explaining matters. And now - very much against my own wish and because I know the extra burden I will unwillingly have to place on your shoulders - I have to inform you that I feel unable to give that retreat I had accepted to give to the Sisters in Liverpool! I waited until today to see would there be sufficient improvement to permit me to undertake this grand work so dear to a missioner's heart - I have again to acknowledge - also acting under the advice of the Rev. Fr Superior - that I am but slightly recovered from the effects of that sledge-hammer blow that struck me last week. While I will be able to do odds and ends to help the cause, my heart won't stand any but very light strains just now.

I am very sorry for the disappointment I cause you and the extra work thrown

on you, but at least, I can do some little thing to enable you to meet the difficulty by praying for you - especially the prayer of acceptance - willingly and lovingly too - with God's Grace, the effects on body and mind of broken health at a moment when I thought all was so well.

Just one further remark. It is this. May I say with all the sincerity of my heart how happy I am to see the new Great Scholasticate building which - through your energy, zeal, trust in Holy Providence all based on such intense love for Christ himself and His poor African children - is nearing completion. It is fitting that this work so important for the Church in Africa and Ireland should be brought to completion by a near relative of the great Right Rev. John T. Murphy to whom the Irish Province and the missions owe so much.

Pardon this long rigmarole. Two lines would suffice to carry the burden of this letter - but our human hearts must have its own little story to tell in addition to the matter-of-fact bald statement - "I couldn't go to Kimmage - neither can I go to Liverpool".⁴²

It is clear that Bishop Shanahan had a great admiration for Dr Dan Murphy and for the great work he was doing for the advancement of the missionary movement at home and abroad. He had earlier advised Dr Murphy that it would be in the best interests of the Irish Province and the missions that he undertake a tour of the missions himself. In particular this visitation would help to defuse certain tensions that tended to build up between those working at the front lines and those serving in the colleges at home.⁴³ Fr Murphy, acting on this suggestion, set out the following spring to tour all the main mission stations manned by Irish Spiritans in west Africa. He had the accounts of his first-hand impressions and findings published in the *Missionary Annals* throughout 1936. He was the first head of the Irish Province to embark on such a fact finding mission. No doubt this initiative gave great pleasure and hope to Dr Shanahan. He needed such encouragement at the time as he was himself feeling in poor shape.

As Dr Shanahan's illness persisted he was advised to go to hospital for treatment. As he had been asked by the Mother General to come to Belfast for the opening of their Sale of Work there he wrote on 20 November 1936:

This evening under orders from Dr J. Magennis, I am to go to St Vincent's Hospital for treatment. It will take about fifteen days. After this special treatment I will be once again fit to do a bit of work. My circulatory and nervous systems have to a great extent got badly impaired but not beyond repair! All due to auto intoxication! It was that was wrong with me on the African voyage. If only I had followed your wise and urgent advice I would have gone to Dr Magennis' "garage" immediately on landing in Ireland. But! ..well I didn't go, so I have to go now.

And just now you ask me to give a hand to the Cause in Belfast!⁴⁴

He had promised Dr Murphy that when he recovered he would gladly do odds and ends for the Cause; this was to mean in particular supporting by his presence the promotion activities being done by the Holy Ghost Congregation and the Holy Rosary Sisters in order to show his solidarity with this very necessary back-up missionary work. One form of promotion work that he appreciated was The Missionary Annals. Launched in 1919 it helped immensely to make the missionary work of the Congregation known to the Irish public for the first time. Produced on a shoestring budget it had no monetary rewards to offer the writers who agreed to contribute. When the editor asked Dr Shanahan for a contribution in 1935 he readily agreed. It took the form of an inspirational statement reading as follows:

Rev and Dear Fr Editor

I would ask you to accept my congratulations for the great and successful efforts you and your collaborators are making to bring the cause of Christ in Africa ever nearer to the minds and hearts of our fellow-Catholics in Ireland. God bless you with all those who are co-operators with you in making the cause of Christ in the missions to be better known and better loved in Ireland. The enemies of Christ are leaving nothing undone to make the hopeless cause of their Father - "the Father of lies" - a success even here in Ireland. Of course they won't, they can't succeed, yet all the same they'll continue to work. All the more reason for us, Children of Jesus Christ, Children of Light and Life, to work with Christ in such a whole hearted way that, inasmuch as we can, we will before leaving this world, have made a glorious effort to bring the whole human race to the Sacred Feet and later to the Sacred heart of Jesus Christ. God bless you with all those who are co-operators with you in making the cause of Christ in the missions to be better known and better loved in Ireland.⁴⁵

The following year Fr Jack Jordan as editor of the Annals had a few interviews with Shanahan in Clareville about his early experiences in Nigeria with a view to writing a history of the church in Nigeria as a follow-up to Fr Reginald Walker's book *Holy Ghost Fathers in Africa*. Apart from his own vivid memories it was felt that Shanahan would have documentation from his own years in Nigeria that could be used. The background to this episode is to be found in the memoir on Shanahan composed by his secretary in Nigeria, Sr Philomena Fox. We quote:

Before leaving Onitsha on 7th April, 1932, Bishop Shanahan had set about arranging the files in the bishop's office. As always, he was meticulous about all records and conscious of their historical value. Therefore, everything was carefully sorted. All legal data as well as documents or letters of value concerning the foundation of the Holy Rosary sisters were placed in special file cases and left in the bishop's office. The remainder of his personal files - six or eight boxes - being left for safe keeping with Sister M. Philomena, who had been his secretary.

The removal of these personal files from the bishop's office meant nothing was kept that would give detailed and substantial proof of the many facets of his charity, courage and endurance. This gesture can but add to his stature. These files were kept hidden away in a suitcase until some years later when it was felt something definite should be done about them. Sister suggested handing them over to Mother Therese - at least those pertaining directly to the Holy Rosary sisters - since she, as secretary general and a person of integrity could keep them in the archives, or destroy whatever was not useful for the records, if there were any such. It was becoming more and more uncertain that such valuable 'history' could be safely preserved in a suitcase.

"Begin now to write or dictate your memoirs and the history of Nigeria" Sister said. "Let me think it over - I need to think about it...I will let you know..." replied the Bishop. He came back about a week later, accompanied by a priest who drove a car. "I have thought it over and decided to take the letters back to Clareville and go through them at my leisure.

Almost about the same time the master general of the Holy Ghost Fathers had repeated his earnest request that the history of Nigeria be written. If memory can be trusted, it was Father Jordan, then a seminarian, who was appointed to take notes from Bishop Shanahan about the history of himself and the work in

Nigeria. The bishop then started to go through his letters, giving Father Jordan some notes, perhaps some letters, but the bulk of them ended up in the fire of the little room in 'Clareville'. This was in 1935 or 1936. The bishop assured Father Jordan, 'You will write a book, ten years from now about Nigeria. I will be in it, but it won't be about me'...

Bishop Shanahan had, by burning his personal files, destroyed all the evidence for ever, of the many insults he had endured: of all the attacks that a strong man could suffer during a life spent in building a tremendous Christian country in Africa, as well as of countless tributes of the highest appreciation and gratitude. He wanted all to be forgotten, simply thanking God for the good he had obtained from them. "They could do further good, nor harm!"

A digest of these interviews was published and though written by Fr Jordan and obviously coloured by his racy style, Shanahan was persuaded to sign his name to them.⁴⁶ The account of his initiation into the apostolate by Père Lejeune through the medium of brick-making for the mission house still makes vivid reading and these interviews provided much of the material for Jordan's "thriller" *Bishop Shanahan of Nigeria* published in 1948.

Writing to the Holy Rosary Sisters working on the missions, Shanahan refers in passing from time to time to his little contribution to their cause at home:

Occasionally I am asked to appear on the propaganda platform as a sample of "old missionary types" - the new type being of the stream-lined, clean-shaven sort; just like the old in all essentials but certainly much more up-to-date to meet the new requirements of an ever developing, ever progressing mission. The Apostolic Delegate said enough good things about the Nigeria of today to convince the oldest type of missionaries that the men of today and the Sisters of today - are "almost" (it would be to much to expect old missionaries to admit more than that !) as good as the missionaries twenty or thirty years ago!⁴⁷

Occasionally also Dr Shanahan was called on by diocesan Bishops to deputise for them in conferring the Sacraments of Ordination and Confirmation. One ordination was recalled because it involved a student who was so ill that he was not expected to live very long. That ordination took place in Maynooth and the ordinand - Patrick Tuohy from Mayo - happily made an excellent recovery and was to enjoy a long life of active pastoral service in the diocese of Dublin.

"Charming confreres"

When Shanahan wrote to Dr Murphy as he was en route to Nigeria with high hopes of being able to resume pastoral work there, he mentioned that he would miss his "charming confreres" in Clareville and the college with whom he had fitted in well. Among those in Clareville at the time, apart from Bishop Neville and Fr Joe Baldwin who had been prefect with Shanahan in Rockwell, there was Fr Phil O'Shea, who had also prefected at that time in Rockwell and had, like Shanahan, to make up his theology course while teaching part-time at the college. In his retirement at Clareville Fr O'Shea was continuing Fr Ebenrecht's hobby of collecting old stamps in aid of the missions. Fr Larry Healy, former president of Blackrock and now engaged in compiling its history, was also in residence in Clareville; it was he who had in fact negotiated the purchase of Clareville while president of Blackrock, and he had been Provincial in 1902 when Shanahan had set out from Clareville for Nigeria. But the most 'charming confrere' that Shanahan had to live with in Clareville was Fr Charlie Meyer whom he had known well as a prefect during his first year as Dean in

Rockwell (1900-01). Academically gifted, Charlie was innocent of some of the practical aspects of living and had been passed round from one community to another over the years on the missions and at home. He was good for a lecture on any subject provided you had the time and the patience and as Shanahan had time for all people he must have had many a lecture from Fr Charlie - even about the way to go about missionary work in Africa! The year 1935 saw the arrival in Clareville of two men that Shanahan had known well in the past: Dr Edward Crehan under whom he had served as prefect in Rockwell and whom he succeeded as Dean of the boarding school, and Fr Patrick O'Connor, who had served in Nigeria from 1928 having previously worked in East Africa and Trinidad. Both were now spent forces. Two confreres in the college are worth mentioning: Fr James Meehan, who had served in Nigeria under Shanahan but who had to retire from the tropics due to ill health, and the rather eccentric but lovable Fr Andy McDonald, who had done part of his theology studies at Rockwell with Shanahan. Like Shanahan himself he was well-known to the regulars who called for alms. Whereas Fr Andy usually began with some words of catechesis, and presenting religious objects before eventually producing the sought-for coins, Shanahan's instinctive reaction was to empty his pockets of whatever cash he had for other purposes. An incident recalled by Fr James Finucane, one of the "charming confreres" who was billeted for a period at Clareville while serving as Dean of the Day school, runs as follows: "Could you give me a shilling, Father?" the "beggar" being Bishop Shanahan. "I was standing below there at the tram stop, waiting to go into town, when a poor man came along. I put my hand in my pocket and found I had only a pound note. So I gave it to him. Now I'm stuck. A shilling will do. It's too far to go back to the college. Thank heavens you arrived. A Good Samaritan is just what I need."

The bursar during Shanahan's first two years in retirement, namely Fr James Burke, was well-known to him. As a prefect in 1900 Jim Burke had been a member of the choir which sang at Shanahan's ordination in the college chapel and twenty years later he had composed the Missionary Hymn to be sung at Shanahan's episcopal ordination in Maynooth. As bursar from 1922 Fr Burke had acted as Bishop Shanahan's agent in financial transactions for Nigeria.

Some of the Brothers resided in Clareville. In the past they would be responsible for the housekeeping there as one of their duties, but now these chores were mostly done by a paid layman. One gathers that cleanliness left much to be desired until the newly-arrived Sisters of St Paul (1934) began to make their presence felt. It took more time for their writ to extend to Clareville and even Shanahan, who was always seen to be very discreet in his remarks about the running of the college, commented to a conferee about the low standard of housekeeping in Clareville.

Among the Brothers who resided at Clareville was Br Gerald Heffernan, who looked after the college farm in Merrion. Br Gerald, a fellow Tipperaryman, would have had a special interest for Shanahan as he had seen him come to Rockwell as a novice ca 1900, and he knew that he had volunteered to go to Nigeria with him in 1914. Instead of the mission fields Br Gerald was destined to till the fields of Rockwell, Kimmage and Merrion. There were in fact three Brothers residing in Clareville who had worked in various missions. Br Osmond Healy, who had set out for Africa from Clareville with Shanahan in 1906, and who had done Trojan work there for school children, was now helping out in the vegetable garden and orchard attached to Clareville. As this chore was none to his liking he was continually chafing at his restricted life-style and striving to be allowed to return to Africa. He was in fact to return for a brief period to The Gambia where he had started in 1902. Br Sabbas Devlin, who had laboured for

years in Sierra Leone and The Gambia, lived in Clareville from 1934 while teaching in the Preparatory School. Br Alban Gilroy had spent many years in Sierra Leone where he had been a close companion of Shanahan's friend Bishop John O'Gorman. Br Alban was among those who had welcomed Bishop Shanahan and his party as they stopped off at Freetown en route to Nigeria in December 1920.

A few prefects also were billeted in Clareville while serving at the College, and Shanahan was known to be very close to these young men having had some years experience himself of the problems of prefecting.

It was not customary in religious houses for confreres to visit one another's rooms and as silence was observed in all parts of the community area from evening or night prayer till after breakfast there was little scope for prolonged conversation. It was the norm that confreres took recreation in common after meals, that is, they strolled through the college grounds in groups of twos or threes. The two missionary Bishops were often seen together for this exercise. In fact that was the most vivid memory for students at the college in those years. One place where people tended to meet was in the 'Tailor's shop' which was located in the spacious old kitchen of the Clareville mansion. Local gossip was retailed there and football matches were replayed and analysed but one could not imagine Shanahan devoting much of his time to that form of indoor amusement.

On occasion Shanahan refers in his letters to his rather enclosed life in Clareville. Writing on 24 February 1937 he had this to say:

My wire was a poor excuse for the letter that should have been written, and yet you are never absent from my thoughts and prayers. But I'm very very lazy since winter set in with all the temptations to laziness brought about by this big blazing fire, an armchair in which even an angel would be inclined to sleep if he sat down on it. Then there are books galore - and time to spare! While outside my very window winter rages, cold, dark, bitter sleety winter... And yet, strange as it may seem, I take it all and enjoy it all too, since Providence has sent me here to do a very mild form of penance. At least I'm getting so accustomed to it that the sense of "exile" which almost drove me mad has left me - I'm happy here just where I am and as I am, since God has willed it so. Did I ever think the day would come when I could write this in all sincerity and truth! Now you have just had a peep behind the curtain of a lazy man's mind.

I will go to Killeshandra on Saturday. Later on, I'll send a "wire" - another "wire", when I'm sure I'm in the right train and going in the right direction to Crossdoney.⁴⁸

Shanahan occasionally had callers to his room from the outside world. Two deserve mention as they would have brought back distant memories of the first three years he had spent away from home in Beauvais, namely Abbot Anscar Vonier of Buckfast Abbey, who had been a student at Beauvais, and Fr Gerald Griffin, who had been a member of the community at the time. Unfortunately the day Abbot Vonier arrived at Clareville, Shanahan was away and it is not recorded whether they met later. Fr Griffin, who had subsequently parted company with the Congregation and had served in several parts of the world as chaplain, was now returning to retire in his native Limerick. One can imagine that the trials and the joys of the Apostolic School at Beauvais must have been relieved during that passing visit.

One unusual visitor was a young French lady who had spent some time in Killeshandra and was then on her way home to France. Shanahan was intrigued by her, admiring her special quality of mind while aware of the limitations of her

horizons. We leave to himself to describe this visitor in his inimitable manner:

6 November 1937: "I had two long talks with Mademoiselle. Never did I hear any person speak in more beautiful and more sincere terms than she did when telling me of those days of unutterable happiness she spent in Killeshandra. Her ideal of what a religious missionary congregation ought to be is being realised to the fullest in Killeshandra of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. There is something pathetic and wistfully appealing in that lovely soul on fire with zeal for the furtherance of God's cause in Africa and therefore first of all in the missionaries who are to evangelise Africa.

She insisted on my reading her letter to our Superior General, Right Rev. Bishop Le Hunsec - how she praised the spirit of heavenly fervour, fraternal charity, simplicity and sincerity of the Sisters. Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum. All crowned with the spirit of hospitality - Catholic and Irish and missionary in the best sense of those terms - to add anything further might perhaps seem fulsome - but no, there was nothing of that in her heart or in the expression of her thoughts - she said much more but...

I showed her around the College. She did not think that there were such colleges in Ireland. Like all continental people she must have imagined we had not progressed beyond the category of first class Bush Stations - with emphasis on the - 'Bush'. And to her astonishment and great edification she found Ireland to be something of the nature of a mighty big Church with God and His people living together with something of that charming and tender familiarity - but reverential familiarity - to be found in a good Catholic home where children and parents are for each other a source of the purest, most innocent, most delectable happiness - thus for Madamoiselle. God be with her. Her visit to Killeshandra will have given to her a new happiness that will console her and accompany her all the way to heaven.⁴⁹

Shanahan had himself been given to understand that his own visits to Killeshandra were felt to be disruptive of the unity of formation required in a novitiate. Naturally he found this very disappointing, but as was his wont he accepted this as being part of God's Providence in his life. He maintained his correspondence with Mother General and with the Sisters overseas, encouraging them in their apostolate and reporting when significant events which would be of interest for them.

Away back in 1932 when Dr Shanahan found himself cut off from Nigeria he consoled himself that at least he could help the cause there by his total dedication to the Missionary Sisters he had founded with such great trouble and care. So when he heard that a group were setting out for Nigeria early in May 1933 he did all he could to see that their journey was pleasant and they received VIP treatment on board the Appam where he was well known to the staff. He had gone over to Liverpool with them to make sure that all went well as they set off on their first long voyage. From the letter he wrote to one of them, Sister Colman, shortly after their departure we get a vivid sense of his attachment to them and his preoccupation with their apostolate as he visualised it.

I seldom felt more lonely in my life than when standing there alongside of Fr Heerey (their chaplain and mentor at Killeshandra) who was as lonely as I - on that Liverpool wharf from which you sailed, I saw that little group of four, each of them dearer to me than my own life, fade away in the distance as the ship sailed slowly into the grey mist that shrouded the Mersey. "God be with you - God be with you" we repeated as we blessed you, our hearts full of happiness and sorrow but also of hope and confidence because you are not

alone on the ship; Christ your beloved Bridegroom was with you. "Going..teach..all nations (including poor pagan Nigeria) - Go, I am with you." By the time this reaches you, you will be already over the first great wonder and surprise you experienced as you entered a new Continent, but also a pagan Continent, and meeting there your own, those valiant veterans and pioneers of Our Lady of the Rosary.⁵⁰

No one doubted Bishop Shanahan's total commitment to the missionary order of sisters he had founded but a cloud had appeared on the horizon. He looked forward to his visits to Killeshandra and so did the Sisters - those in formation that is. The sight of his car the "Isis" or the appearance of the special kneeler placed for him near the sanctuary in the convent chapel was enough to send their hearts singing as they loved his very human approach to all things spiritual - so different from some of their other mentors. And that was the problem. Those responsible for the formation of those young Sisters came to the conclusion that Shanahan's visits were a disrupting factor in the process of formation as understood by them. A number of tactics were employed to minimise his influence. An expert on Canon Law was asked to make a special study of who in fact was the legal founder of the society and when it was discovered that since the society was founded outside Shanahan's jurisdiction namely, the Vicariate of Southern Nigeria it was the local Bishop of Kilmore who was in fact the canonical founder! Shanahan was apprised of this unceremoniously during his brief return to Nigeria in 1935 and though he must have felt it deeply he made no protestation. In fact in an article in the African Rosary published by the Holy Rosary Sisters he referred to the late Bishop Finegan as the founder of the society. He tried to keep up his contact but on a reduced scale. Eventually the Mother General made it known clearly to Bishop Shanahan how matters stood and that he was no longer to consider himself as having any privileged status as the founder. But for external appearances sake and not to create any crisis situation the minimum correspondence and other contacts should be maintained. Naturally this must have come as great shock to Bishop Shanahan, but again he took this turn of events as part of God's providence and in his own spiritual best interests.

Writing to his close friend Mother Brigid Ryan, whom he had known since she came out to Nigeria as a lay person before the founding of the Holy Rosary Sisters, he expressed his disappointment that she failed to come to see him while he was on a passing visit to Killeshandra:

I should have so wished to see you before I left Killeshandra at Easter. And I regret you had not confidence enough in me to have a talk with me. And yet I feel certain God arranged it all, as He always does. Our heavenly Father knows what is best for his children. A little pill of humiliation a couple of times a year is most beneficial to our spiritual health.

I was sorry for being the cause, without knowing it, of storms, no helping these things; they seem to happen in spite of one. Ever and always great spiritual good comes out of them if only we accept, keep calm, with our hearts centred on God. I also regret in a very particular manner the example given by me to your poor young professed sisters...but I understand now that I was imprudent - also I am cured forever.

I have the deepest confidence in all of you especially since I was made to understand there's one Rule in Killeshandra for all - a Rule that no one can interfere with ... not even bishops. In spite of the passing twinge of pain the thing caused I have the greatest admiration for those who uphold, cost what it may, the sacredness of the external observance of the rule for the sake of the

internal observance.⁵¹

One person he felt he must inform about his changed situation vis-à-vis the Sisters was the Provincial, Dr Murphy, especially when he heard he was to preach the annual retreat to the Sisters in Killeshandra. He called over to Kimmage to advise Dr Murphy of the situation but finding him engaged he returned to Clareville without having seen him and proceeded to inform him by letter instead:

My dear Dr Murphy,

I hear you are to begin the Killeshandra retreat on the 22 inst. May I request of you a special favour not to refer to me - in case you might be so inclined to do so for one reason or another either directly or indirectly in conversation or otherwise as having anything whatsoever to do with the Congregation at Killeshandra.

I called over to Kimmage to see you and mention in a few words my reason for asking this favour of you - but you were occupied and I could not see you. This is a matter very personal to me and to the Rev. Mother General. It concerns my own spiritual interests in a most co..... manner and also the spiritual interests and the good order, harmony and peace of Killeshandra. My presence there has an effect the very opposite of which I had or could possibly have intended.

So the Rev. Mother General is of opinion and I fully agree with her that in the best interests of all concerned I would not go to Killeshandra again. For many years the urgency of this step was evident to me. God wanted it. I had left Nigeria. I am now nobody, nothing - and rightly so - I should also leave Killeshandra. The little sacrifice that entails will be offered with all that's left to me of my life here below for the spiritual welfare of Killeshandra. I cannot, must not trust myself in a place - and such a holy place - among such holy souls too - when I know now that beyond doubt which God tells me to shun. I feel I am entirely happy to know now that God's will is that I should not be there - I am free, absolutely free at last. How good God is.

Rev. Mother General only and I alone know how matters stand - there will be no reference or allusion made to it in public. I will simply 'fade away' physically though for the keeping up correspondence on a very limited scale - hardly ever write except to a few - or only a few indifferent letters.⁵²

The Sisters in Nigeria and in Scotland kept in continual contact with him and he felt he had to reply occasionally to their stream of letters. In his Christmas greetings to the sisters in Nigeria sent 8 December 1937 he referred to his changed position as regards Nigeria and Killeshandra as follows:

I am well and happy in my own way, here in this quasi-hermit seclusion of Clareville, where God will not fail to be with me as he used to in days gone by in Nigeria. I know it is because of his special love for me that he has called me here to be alone with Him - won't you help me by your prayers, I rely on them so much. To realise this more and more, and not therefore continue to pine after Nigeria - as I used to - I think he will forgive me if occasionally I do so still even though I ought to know that the same loving Lord so perceptibly experienced in one's very heart and senses as well as in the soul in Nigeria, is the Self same God here in Clareville. How often do I not speak to Him and to our Blessed Mother of my own Missionary priests and sisters and people in Nigeria - are we not all one in Him!

All goes wonderfully well in Killeshandra - I go there seldom. God does not want me there except through my prayers. My work there is ended long ago.

Now I have the unutterable happiness of seeing the young congregation fully developed and growing ever and ever more to the image and likeness of Jesus as seen in the likeness of His Blessed Mother. Killeshandra is blessed by God, thanks to the simplicity, humility, intense love and generosity of each and all its members. May charity be ever your most evident virtue as the crowning of all the other virtues. That greater love you evidently have since you are in Nigeria, in its schools and hospitals wherever a soul is to be won for God and Heaven.

I meet sometimes the Sisters here in Dublin. They are doing very well in Holles Street Hospital, all in view of Nigeria - of those poor suffering mothers to whom they are to be God's Providence in the most sacred moment of their life and that of their children, God's children - to be your supernatural children too - since through you their souls are reborn, re-created 'Sons of God'. The sisters at the University in Dublin are doing well. So are the sisters in Scotland and London. Nothing is being left undone for Nigeria. Continue to have an ever greater and more loving trust in Providence - if that were possible. Be what God wants you to be. God, your heavenly Father will never see you in need, whether the need refers to spiritual or temporal matters.

And now my blessing - God's blessing of course. Since it is in his Holy Name and united with Him and with our Blessed Mother that I bless you. P. S I thank the sisters who have written to me during the last twelve months - aye even during the last five years. Your letters to me have been not alone a grand form of sisterly love and charity, but a form of apostolate - you have brought days and months and years of happiness to me here in my Clareville cell. There all you have kept my heart and soul aflame with the flaming charity of your own hearts and souls. They have made me pray for you bearing the heavy burden of the heat and sacrifice that weigh so heavily on the missionary soldiers - and on his or her heart.

May I ask you to continue this form of apostolate and wait for some return if not here below at least surely in Heaven. Once again a Happy Christmas to all, and God's holy peace in the hearts of us all.⁵³

One such was the last illness and death of their former Mistress of novices, Mother Aquinas OP, who died rather unexpectedly in Sion Hill some 100 yards from Clareville. Mother Aquinas had been responsible for the spiritual formation of the Holy Rosary Sisters for the first ten years and as she had been highly thought of by all including Shanahan himself he knew the Sisters at home and abroad would appreciate a full account of her last moments as witnessed by him. First his letter to Mother General:

Just now I sent you a phone message through the Gardai, ever so obliging - in Killeshandra - to tell you that poor Mother Aquinas was anointed this afternoon.

A messenger came over to tell me this sad news.

You know of course that Mother is in the Sion Hill Convent. She came down for the retreat, had flu, fell ill almost immediately with lung and heart trouble. From the start she seemed - the Sisters told me - to be seriously ill.

On Friday I returned to Blackrock with the intention of going to Cavan on Saturday. A phone message came from Cavan to tell me the Bishop had the flu.

On Saturday morning I heard for the first time that Mother was ill. In the evening I called over to see her. Mother Prioress took me to her cell. At first

sight of her I found it hard to keep back the tears and repress the emotions that swept over my heart and soul, as I saw her poor worn suffering-racked features.

I knew that another "farewell" was about to be said, another parting to take place. Already there was marked on her face that Something of the eternal beauty of heaven, the seal of God on those who die in the peace of the Lord. Her first words were of and about Killeshandra! Had I been there? Had I seen you and found you all well, happy, etc. etc.? Then in a few rapid fleeting seconds her mind swept over those last 14 or 15 years with the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Killeshandra. Ah how she loved and still loves you one and all. Happy little incidents, and great events were recalled: the first days shrouded in the uncertain darkness of the unknown future: then the first "Black" postulants, and oh! how black they were - those first postulants - and how dark the gloom that must have enveloped them: but through it all a voice was distinctly heard in each soul: "courage, keep on, follow me, I am with you, don't fear", "And we kept on" said Mother Aquinas, "our hands held in the invisible but real hands of Jesus Christ . . . Then dawned the day of the first Receptions. This was symbolic of the new light growing stronger and stronger in every soul in Killeshandra: then profession, the first professions followed; later the sad but glorious day of the first departures for Nigeria.

All the above were rather flashes of the thoughts in our inner souls with only a word here and there to show that both of us were thinking the same thoughts; offering to God the same acts of gratitude along with all in Killeshandra and Nigeria. I was told to remain only a few minutes - so fifteen years - the most glorious years of our lives were summed up in these few last minutes together - we lived it all again. And now I had to go - our thoughts went now more directly to the Invisible Presence for whose love she had lived her whole life, crowned by its last fifteen years as the Mother of Missionaries - of you, her beloved daughters in Christ. I gave her my Cross to kiss - she took it, kissed it, blessed herself with: "We will meet again!" ... I promised to say a triduum of Masses for her - in Sion Hill. I said the first this morning. But she was so much better that I was not asked up to see her.

Then just an hour ago, a messenger came: "Mother is anointed, she wants to see you."

I am back to write you these few thoughts that I cannot keep to myself, I want you - who above and beyond all are, under God, dearest to Mother Aquinas, to know something of one who occupies a place in your spiritual, religious and missionary life so intimately associated with God, with all that's good and beautiful and true, noble and generous that I know how eager you are for the least little bit of news concerning her.

Mother Ursula from Cabra is with Mother Aquinas all the time. Mother Ursula was in Killeshandra for three years!

As I was leaving the convent, Mother Xavier was to come over from Dunlaoghaire and Mother General from Cabra. Such another meeting took place in Killeshandra just fifteen years ago.

Each day day I will write to let you know how poor Mother Aquinas fares in a battle where the odds against her are 1,000 to one. So the doctor told me a few minutes ago.

No need for me to ask you to pray that our Blessed Mother of the Holy Rosary

may obtain for her all the graces which she knows every soul needs at this most sacred of all moments when eternity is in the balance. I'm trusting this to a train conductor to have it posted at the G.P.O.⁵⁴

He added in a postscript that he was sending a cable to Nigeria to inform Bishop Heerey and the Holy Rosary Sisters about Mother Aquinas's illness. Writing years later, Sr Philomena Fox fills us in on the background of this last encounter between Bishop Shanahan and Mother Aquinas:

Mother Aquinas left Killeshandra almost immediately after self-government had been set up in 1934. She had very seriously considered transferring to the Holy Rosary sisters but had been advised to return to the Dominican order for at least one year before making a final decision. She suffered great mental agony during that year. However, she decided that it was better from every point of view that she remain a Dominican. She found great peace of heart towards the end, living a most saintly life. She came down from Belfast where she had been prioress about two years to make the retreat in Sion Hill. There she became very ill.

On the evening of 17th January, 1937, notice came to Killeshandra that Mother Aquinas had contracted pneumonia and was not expected to recover. Mother Augustine, Mother Brigid and Mother Thérèse left immediately by car for Sion Hill arriving there about 11.00 p.m. Meanwhile Aquinas was moved to a room on the second floor, outside the enclosure so that the Holy Rosary sisters could be brought to her bedside as soon as they arrived. During the evening Father Leen, Mother, Mother Xavier and Sister M. Ursula were with her. About 8.00 or 9.00 p.m. Bishop Shanahan was shown into the room, apparently. He came to the foot of the bed and Mother Aquinas instantly opened her eyes, looked at him. And tried to move forward. She was already in an upright position as a help to her breathing. In a gasping voice, with all the sincerity of her noble mind and heart shining through her eyes, she managed to say: "My Lord ... my Lord - I apologise ... I'm sorry." Bishop Shanahan raised his hand in blessing and absolution. Exhausted, Mother Aquinas lay back peacefully on her pillows. The bishop returned to 'Clareville' for the night. He was gone before the Holy Rosary sisters reached Sion Hill, having assured himself they were on their way.

Who had sent for Bishop Shanahan? As described by the porter who answered the door at 'Clareville', two women dressed in black, one elderly and one quite young, knocked at the door and announced that Mother Aquinas was dying in Sion Hill - a short distance away - and wanted to see him. The bishop, who had been reading his night office close by, hurried to the door to make further enquiries. There was no sign whatsoever of the two messengers. It has never been discovered who they were. What matter if they were angels in the spirit or in the flesh? Mother wanted to see Bishop Shanahan and her wish was granted.⁵⁵

Next morning Bishop Shanahan wrote to the Sisters in Killeshandra to tell in detail about Mother Aquinas' death:

18 January 1937

Yesterday I sent you a phone message telling you of the very serious nature of Mother Aquinas' illness. Today I have the sad duty - but a duty in which joy and sorrow, heaven and earth, our poor human heart on earth and eternal life in heaven have a share - the duty to tell you that your first mistress of novices, the first mistress of novices of your dearly beloved congregation passed away

from earth to heaven this morning at eleven o'clock. As a priest I have witnessed the passing away of many, many souls, but, never have I been moved as I have been moved by the deathbed scene I still see while I write these lines. Only saints are granted those overwhelming graces that enable them to pass on through the gates of time in and through the gates of eternity there to stand before their judge, but also their friend and spouse: Our Lord Jesus Christ in person. While suffering intense pain and anguish she suffered as the saints and martyrs suffer; not for a moment did she falter; no weakness of will, no clouding - even though physically agonising - of her beautiful mind, that mind of hers was ever contemplating all that is true and good and beautiful. Mother Aquinas saw God in everybody, everywhere, in all God's living creatures, in the fields, and flowers and trees, and away up in the depths of the blue firmament, as in the flaming glories of a sunset; always, ever God; the living, loving, beauty of God met her eyes, spoke to her heart. She was never tired of pointing him out to those who were privileged to have her as mistress of novices - as mother of your religious, missionary life - in your beloved congregation. God gave her the grace to see himself right through the harrowing sufferings and terrors that for a time seem to overwhelm every soul at the thought of death. But, the hour of trial over, she could say with unutterable truth and sincerity: "I have no fear of death"- that was God's voice in her heart and soul - her answer in the hour of tribulation when one is all alone, with no hand to grasp, no power to lean on save the hand of God, the power of God. Mother Aquinas died as she lived, a saintly, happy, edifying death. Could there be any greater consolation for all those who love her - for you especially - for all of us, who have been associated with her in the great work she did for the cause of Christ and for souls in working for you, her beloved missionary novices and Sisters.

And now a few details linking up yesterday with today. When I phoned yesterday I knew for certain that Mother General with members of her Council would come immediately, to represent the congregation.

This morning when I went over to Sion Hill you can imagine how happy I was to hear they had arrived during the night. I went to see Mother Aquinas. There beside her was the great spiritual director and friend of her life during the last fifteen years, Dr. Leen. There also were Rev. Mother General, O.P., with the Rev. Mother Prioress of Sion Hill and Cabra. Needless to say poor Mother Xavier was there.

Mother Aquinas recognised me and told me the Sisters from Killeshandra had arrived. That was the final drop of earthly joy given to her here below. They had just gone down to Mass. I told her I was going to offer up for her this last Mass uniting her whole being to Our Lord in the chalice and on the paten. Only a few hours more and she would see him face to face, possess him and he her for all eternity.

So I went down to the chapel for this last Mass for Mother Aquinas on earth. Ah, what it does mean at the hour of death to have given all to God - to have had with our fellow-religious and missionaries - hard life of sacrifice, but also a life spent for God and for him alone. Oh the reward seen for all this at the hour of death and the dawn of eternity! Those were the thoughts that were in my mind after my Mass as I knelt before the altar. Mass over, I met Mother General, Mother Brigid and Mother Thérèse - what it does mean for missionaries to meet on an occasion of this nature.

In Mother Aquinas the first of the new congregation was about to lead the way to heaven, to show us one and all how we are to die, and by that fact how we are to live - just like our Holy Father in Rome in showing the whole Church and the whole world how to live and die a child of God, a son of God.

We went together to kneel and pray beside Mother Aquinas until the end. We suffered with her and in some mysterious way felt something of her own death when she died. Henceforth we shall live more in heaven than on earth.

Meanwhile you were never nearer to me than you are now. I have seen your life and your death in the life and death of your first mistress of novices: "Heaven- 'tis heaven is the prize"- and the meeting above in heaven.

Let us love each other in that divine love of Christ, to the end, and the end will be only the beginning of eternity in heaven - all of us together.⁵⁶

Knowing that the Sisters in Nigeria and in the training college in Scotland would be looking for a fuller account of what was happening so far away he penned a very long account giving the details that he knew they would appreciate.

Welcome trips abroad

Few things gave Shanahan more happiness than an opportunity to renew his contact with France. He might poke fun at the "insular" views of some French people in their superiority complex in certain areas where they themselves were seen to have excelled, but he loved to have the opportunity of returning to France, which he regarded as his second home. Shortly after writing about the views of the French lady who called to Blackrock after spent some time in Killeshandra, he got an invitation from his former Vicar General in Nigeria, Monsig Marcel Grandin to attend his episcopal ordination in France. The invitation was all the more tempting as the ceremony was to take place at Alençon near Lisieux, thus affording him the opportunity to revisit the shrine of St Thérèse, but his greatest interests as ever were not merely personal but the renewed links with Nigeria and the apostolate. Writing to Mother Bernard on 22 December 1937 he said:

You may have learned that my former Vicar General in Nigeria Right Rev. Monsignor Grandin who had been appointed in 1927 Prefect Apostolic of Oubangui, South of Lake Chad, has just been appointed its first Vicar Apostolic as well as its first Bishop. He is now in France. He has written to me and to two other old Nigerian fellow missionaries here in Ireland - Rev. Father Vincent Davey P.P. of Antrim and Father Thaddeus O'Connor of Rockwell College, to go over to Alençon, Orne Normandy (near Lisieux) for his consecration, so that Nigeria will be well represented by her former Fathers-in-Christ. Right Rev. Mgr. Grandin carries in his heart such a profound love for Nigeria that do as he may, he has to fuse it into the new love he has for his new mission of Oubangui. Thank God this can be done, for there is but one Divine Living Love in which we all participate, along with all those we love - One Lord, One God, One Faith, One Love - One Africa!

May our Blessed and Divine Infant Jesus, our own missionary from heaven, ever inflame your hearts and souls and whole being with an ever greater heavenly fire of love for all that is God - for all that is in the interest of God.⁵⁷

Being but a private member of a religious congregation Dr Shanahan had to have permission from his local Superior and the Provincial before availing of Monsig Grandin's invitation. And of course the necessary funds had to be made available. On being contacted Dr Murphy readily gave his consent to the trip and sent Dr

Shanahan a cheque to help cover his travel expenses. When thanking Dr Murphy for his cheque he wrote:

It does much more than cover my expenses. And above all it does me good to receive it from generous hearts and generous hands. God bless you and the Irish Province. May God ever grant you in abundance all your requests, spiritual and temporal, apostolic - for all your requests have ever in view His Honour, Glory to be realised in the salvation of Africa.

I am off in the morning to Paris where I will present all your affectionate good wishes to the most Rev Superior General and confreres.⁵⁸

While staying at the Motherhouse in Paris on his return journey after the episcopal ordination he dropped a few lines to the Mother General of the Holy Rosary Sisters reporting on the ceremony and advising her of his planned itinerary:

28 January 1938: Tomorrow morning I leave Paris for England and a little later on, England for Ireland. I will call to see the Sisters in London. I was even thinking of going up to Scotland from Liverpool to see the Sisters in Craiglockhart - but . . . that's not definite just now.

Mgr Grandin's consecration at Alençon was a very grand exhibition of real Catholic life in that city blessed by being the birth-place of the Little Flower.

There were immense crowds gathered to see the grandiose ceremony. It took place in a magnificent old Basilica. There was an Archbishop and six Bishops present, besides Monsignori and Deans, ad lib!

The last consecration of a Bishop in the Basilica and in Alençon took place some 300 years ago . . . Msg Grandin's heart is still in Nigeria! So he said at the banquet.

He is to "fly" back to his Mission. It will take him four days and will cost much less than the voyage by sea and land.

I have spent fifteen glorious days here in this country that I ever love. Nowhere do I feel more at home. France is now as ever a great missionary country and the home of saints too...

A week later, 4 February 1938, he was reporting to Mother General on his progress through England as follows:

I spent a few delightful days with the Sisters in St. Charles' College, London. The Sisters are ever so well and happy and a credit to the Cause and the Missionary Congregation in whose interests they are working so hard in that "outpost" of the missionary world, London. From London I went on to Birmingham, where I spent another couple of happy days - but oh! the number of Mission talks I had to give to I don't know how many categories of Sisters, Probationers, Nurses, Domestic Economy Students, etc. etc., winding up with visits to all the schools - and to all the patients

But they were and are all so deeply interested in the Missions that I couldn't but comply with their wishes to hear something about life on the Missions.

And now here I am in Craiglockhart - not because there is an International Rugby match on tomorrow as some people might be inclined to think . . .

Since Wednesday night - it was like walking into a little Convent Station, hidden away in the Scottish Bush - and oh, the happiness of meeting a bit of Nigeria, a very living bit too in the little group of Nigerian Missionary Sisters. The Sacred Heart Nuns have arranged to have me stay here in the priests' rooms so that I can frequently meet and talk with the Nigerians. How well and happy they are is a source of delight for me and much more for their Superior General and the Congregation. The Sacred Heart Sisters gave them high

praise for everything: religious life and deportment, hard work at their various studies, in fact a standing example to the whole establishment.

Ever since I came here we're living in thought and conversation in Killeshandra and Nigeria. They have got me to tell them numerable stories about the old places at home and in Nigeria. And 'tis lonely I'll be when I set out on my journey homeward. As I was when I said goodbye to the Sisters in London.

I am not going to the match tomorrow! The Sacred Heart Sisters told me today that their friends told them I would be wise not to go - so I'm not going - but I will listen in. We will form up two International teams here in their lounge and so follow *péripéties* of the game by ear and movement, if not by sight.

On Monday I move on to Manchester and from Manchester to Holyhead and Ireland. When I get there I will make up my "report" from my "secret notes" and give it to you verbally when I you - so I have told the Sisters.

I am so glad to have come on here and to have seen and heard all those good things that fill my heart with joy.

The spirit of Killeshandra is something living, glorious, big, full of heavenly promise for a rich harvest of souls to be reaped for our Divine Master, *Per Ipsum et cum Ipso et in Ipso* in Africa and in Killeshandra.

P.S. - I have definite "orders", nothing less, to write this letter and have it ready for the post at 4 p.m. I've done it. This, they told me is one of the many things they learn to make other people do by means of the "Froebel" system. It has worked on me all right! P.S. (ii) - You'll have heard by now who won the match in Edinburgh!⁵⁹

Much in demand

Shanahan's arrival home was anxiously awaited by Dr Dan Murphy as he wanted him to be present at the laying of the foundation stone of the new chapel in Kimmage on Septuagesima Sunday. Having arrived back on 10 February he attended the ceremony which was a low-key affair performed by Bishop Neville. Called on to speak at the luncheon afterwards Bishop Shanahan compared the architects who try to express some aspect of the beauty of God in their work with the 'divine' architects who work on human souls to produce effects so much more beautiful and more lasting. It was to shelter those divine architects that the buildings at Kimmage have been undertaken - and Shanahan said he foresaw the day when the 200 rooms would be occupied by 200 architects of souls now on the verge of setting out to prepare living stones for the heavenly Jerusalem...⁶⁰

Reporting back to the sisters in Craiglockhart he gives us a glimpse of his very full schedule:

...Having arrived at Manchester I met my brother (Dr Dick. ed) - we had a few grand days together ending in another farewell. Finally I got back to Ireland on the eve of the Rugby International between Ireland and England. Strange as it may seem, I did not go to the match. Had there been a second Miss P. I might have. Ireland was beaten - oh so badly beaten that it must have been an agony for those of their followers - thousands upon thousands of them - who were looking on.

On Sunday last I was present at the laying of the foundation stone of the New Oratory of the Holy Ghost, Kimmage - Dr Neville blessed the Stone.

And now I'm waiting for the great day in Killeshandra. Dr Neville and self are invited. We are guests of his Lordship Dr Lyons on Wednesday next. On

Thursday we motor over with His Lordship to assist at the Pontifical High Mass '*Quid retribuam Domino*'.

On Sunday week I have to conduct a six-day Retreat in the Senior Scholasticate, Kimmage. This is the Sub-Diaconate Retreat. I was not expecting this bit of work but since God has asked me to do it, I am doing it. After that I have to ready for Craiglockhart.

On my return to Blackrock just think of my joy when I found your letters already there before me waiting for me. I spent the evening and the following day back in Craiglockhart. How I thank you for those letters. I was tired on my return to Ireland. All the talking had something to do with this. But the happiness of having been able to give to others a little happiness by all the talking compensated a hundred times over for the passing sense of fatigue...

Then I called to Northumberland Road and there saw all the sisters and gave them all the news and what was left over of your love already heavily drawn upon for Sr M. Ignatius.

And that brings me to the end of this rigmarole of a letter. I have now to write just a few words of thanks to each of you in answer to those most lovely letters you wrote to me.

The strain of all the travelling and talking took its effect on Shanahan's reserves of energy, especially his heart. We find him writing on 15 March: "A line to tell you that there's a recurrence of that heart trouble which makes it almost impossible for me to walk. It is purely of a nervous nature - and gives no trouble so long as I remain quiet. It will be all right after a good rest..." He was not to allowed to rest, however. He was called on to be the celebrant at the solemn Pontifical Mass at the college for St Patrick's day. The students looked forward to his appearances as celebrant on big occasions as they were intrigued by the elaborate ritual of the vesting at the altar and his use of the crozier which, contrary to the liturgical norm, he was allowed by Archbishop Byrne to use when celebrating functions within the diocese of Dublin.

He was still suffering from strain 5 April 1938 when he wrote again to Mother General informing of her of his schedule:

I am about to leave Dublin for Edinburgh. Before I leave I wish to thank you for your very kind letter and your Sisterly advice. I know how earnest it is and how anxious you are for my welfare. I wrote to Rev. Mother in Scotland in the same sense as you did..."

This Retreat, for reasons known to God and a little to myself, too, has cost me much - and I wasn't too well - it is all for the better - and I am happy about it. It has meant "Lent" for me. I know you will ask for prayers for the spiritual success of this little Retreat - the first of its kind I've directed...

Having arrived back at Blackrock on Easter Saturday, 17 April, he wrote as follows to Mother General:

I am too fatigued to go to Killeshandra. I regret this, but it cannot be helped. But you will have so many visitors - including the Bishop for the ceremonies on Monday - during those Easter days that it will be no small relief for you to know that you will have one visitor less. I am going down to Maynooth where I hope to spend a month! and at least get a good rest. I will run up some day, if Joe Dawson can manage to motor me up to Killeshandra. I hear you will have Dr. Heerey soon. You will have some great Nigerian days when he comes!

I called at Northumberland Rd. today (a house occupied by a few Holy Rosary Sisters training as nurses) to wish them a happy Easter, but I did not know the Sisters had been out at the morning ceremonies in the college! We travelled -

without the fact being known to me - on the same tram on to Northumberland Rd. and to make matters worse, I got off at the wrong place - and they saw that too! Now, don't I need a rest?

Back in Blackrock after his much needed rest with the Dawsions in Maynooth he was enjoying the company of some of his confreres home from Nigeria and availing their offer to drive him for a short visit to Killeshandra. He wrote to Mother General on 2 May 1938 informing her:

Most Rev. Dr. Heerey has arrived in Dublin with Father Jos. Delaney - they intend to go to Killeshandra tomorrow - Tuesday evening, to see you and the whole Sisterhood. Dr. Heerey has been good enough to invite me to come along with him and I'm going in this way to accept your kind invitation to Killeshandra. It was worth waiting for this unique occasion. It will be a Nigerian day for all the Sisters - for you first of all - and then, for all of us.

I can just spend a day - for I have to get ready to do a month's Confirmation for Most Rev. Dr. Harty in Cashel. That means preparing a few subjects connected with the great sacrament of confirmation.

I hope you and all the Sisters are well. I have had a good rest - fortunately - and feel fit for the bit of work holy Providence is asking me to do in Cashel diocese.

PS - May I ask you to be good enough to tell Rev. Mother Superior, Mother M. Cecilia of my coming along with Dr Heerey and Fr Joe Delaney. They will of course have informed you of this already. J. S.

From his letters to Sr Michael in Lockhart we get glimpses of his busy schedule during this confirmation tour of the Cashel diocese while residing at Rockwell:

13 May 1938 As you will see from the above address I am at present in Rockwell for three weeks at least if not four. I have done fourteen confirmation ceremonies.

Your grand letter arrived just as I was leaving Dublin for Rockwell (it is from Rockwell I radiate to the different parishes where Confirmation is to be conferred). Today is the first free day I've had since my arrival here. So I must avail of it to tell you my joy on hearing the great good news of your Holy Final Profession...I won't be present at the ceremony on the 15 August for two days before that I will have begun a Retreat for the Ursuline Sisters in Cork. Months ago they asked me to give their annual retreat and I accepted...I feel somewhat fatigued in mind - so you will be good enough to excuse this very short rambling note - it is all I feel able to do at present. I will write to you and the Sisters off and on even though I have little to write about. I did not yet call to see your dear mother. When I get back to Dublin I will not fail to call.⁶¹

Again on 20 May he wrote to Sr Michael. On returning to Blackrock Dr Shanahan availed of an invitation to Killeshandra where he spent a few happy restful days before returning again to Blackrock to attend the Garden Party being organised there in connection with the Catholic Truth Society. In his next letter to Mother General he reported on his train journey back and the Garden Party:

24th June 1938. I found my way back to Dublin without going astray. At Mullingar I met my old friend: the Guard in the Sligo-Dublin express. We are fast friends now. He takes a paternal kind of kindly interest in me by putting me into a first-class carriage with orders not to change until the train stops in Dublin.

Those were happy restful days spent in Killeshandra. Thanks for everything -

and for the Mass intentions, receipt for honoraria of which is enclosed herewith.

The great day in Blackrock was somewhat marred by the rain which poured down steadily all day up to 4 p.m. when it cleared off. However there was ample room for all who came to the Garden Party. They were accommodated in the many halls of the college. There could be no question of going on the grounds.

I did not go to the Garden Party. There was quite a goodly number of Bishops there including the Cardinal and your own Bishop of Kilmore with several Bishops from Africa. I was glad to be able to render a little service to Most Rev. Dr. Lyons. He brought the wrong colour in Vestments-white instead of red - I was delighted that he pontificated in our chapel here in Blackrock.

Dr Neville thought he could get free from the Garden Party - and would have succeeded were it not that his sister came across to Clareville - in all her finery - to compel him, oh ever so gently but very firmly, to get up and put on all his grand robes to accompany her into the "heart of things" - the college halls.

What was most remarkable at the luncheon and meeting - was the way in which the whole Church - bishops, priests, men and women - were all mixed up in chapel, refectory and halls. This was the "Catholic Church" in action. And everybody liked it. It made all feel perfectly at home in their "Father's house and home on earth."

Dr. Heerey did not come to the Meeting.

I wish to be remembered to all the Sisters, novices and postulants in Killeshandra. They with you and your Council Members, M Superior, Mistress of Novices, etc. etc. are ever present to me especially during the offering of the holy Sacrifice and recitation of the holy Office. This you know of course and yet I wish to tell it to you once again so that in your charity you may remember your Masses, prayers, Holy Office. As years pass by I feel ever greater sense of weariness and inability to do anything in the spirit in which one should live and act in fuller conformity with God's holy will as the inevitable end draws each day very nearer: time becoming more and more remote, while eternity impresses itself ever more vividly as the one great final reality, God. So I want you to pray for me that I may persevere and be faithful to God to the end; that in spite of the inevitable fear of God's just judgement I may have ever greater hope in His mercy. How He insists on telling us about His love and His mercy today - feast of His Most Sacred Heart. And won't you ask Our Lady - Queen of the Holy Rosary, to be a Mother to me now as in the past - our advocate at the end where times ceases and eternity begins the thoughts of an old man and a sinner at the close of his life - God bless you all.

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Dr Dan Murphy remarked that Shanahan was so open about his interior life and motives that he was capable of making a general confession to anyone he trusted. There were certain people however to whom he could reveal his inner thoughts and feelings without any hindrance. As most of his extant letters were written to the Holy Rosary Sisters one is not surprised that in some of these letters he speaks very freely indeed about his own soul. One of those with whom he could speak or write most freely was Sr Michael O'Regan whose family he had known for years. As a student in Sion Hill secondary school she was influenced by him to opt for the missionary vocation. He had written to her on several occasions when her mother died while she was away in Scotland and could not be with her. She had taken exchanges of

confidences with him over the years as entirely normal and natural, so she was rather pained when he seemed to have notably distanced himself of late. He tries to explain why in a letter dated 23 June 1938:

This is to assure you that in a couple of days I will write you a long letter so as to make up in some small way for my long silence. I will write to each of the Sisters as well.

I am very sorry for the real pain I have caused you and them by my silence. All the more inexplicable must that have appeared to you because of the long delightful letters you and they write to me. And yet I can assure you, you are one-and-all as near to my heart as ever you were and even more so now because of those unforgettable days I spent with you in Craiglockhart. Days during which you brought me not alone into closer contact with your own hearts and minds but also into contact with those great beautiful souls, the Sacred Heart Nuns and the Students. I can never forget them. While I see and think and pray for you my own very Sisters and daughters in Christ I always see you circled by the Nuns and the students all radiant with God's Holy Presence.

I leave you now, Agnes, my very dear daughter and child in Jesus and Mary - I leave you in the Arms of our Blessed Mother beseeching her to offer you to her own Jesus.

You have always been for me a perpetual reminder of the love, reverence I owe above all to those who are consecrated to God. You have always brought me nearer to God. For this I thank you as I thank all the Sisters of the Holy Rosary... God bless you the gallant little band of Holy Rosary Sisters along with all in Craiglockhart.⁶³

A few days later, 28 June, he did write a long letter explaining his silence:

That's God's greatest blessing just now. How I have prayed for you and thanked God at seeing you My dearest Daughter in Christ

You remember telling me in one of your letters how important it was for me to write to Miss Philip. I have just written at long last to tell her on behalf of my sister in Larine, Maynooth, (Mrs Dawson) how welcome she (Miss Philip) will be to Maynooth to my sister's home. My sister will do all she can to make her happy and will show her the beauty spots in Dublin and Wicklow. Needless to say I will be in Maynooth for the occasion.

Then you very kindly asked me to have a talk with you over the phone about matters connected with Killeshandra and myself. How good of you to suggest this. If I did not ring you up it was because everything that passes over the phone is public property, All messages may be and frequently are tapped. Rather than risk that silence is better.

I think you were anxious about the state of my health and happiness generally. Just now I am very well. In fact today for the first time in months I feel able to write. This is an extraordinary phenomenon where writing is concerned. For long periods at a time my mind seems to be absolutely tied up. Try as I like it won't work. I can spend hours before my desk and be unable to write anything but a few disjointed sentences. All at once this wretched condition ceases when I can write without the least trouble, just as I am doing now.

May I take this opportunity before your return to Killeshandra and then maybe God willing, your departure for Nigeria to tell you the very great joy I have at seeing you so near the final goal of your period of religious formation, the goal of your long novitiate, and that is your final profession in August. That's

God's greatest blessing just now. How I have prayed for you and thank God at seeing your splendid response to his holy grace during those hard years of trials and probation all willed by God; and all that you may be nearer to his Sacred Heart, that you may be a better missionary than you would have been had you never had such hard days.

You will know as I have told you already that you shall always be remembered in my prayers and at the Holy Sacrifice. Nothing else will be of use to us outside God's holy grace.

I thank God for those days He gave us to meet in Craiglockhart. The memory of those hours with the Holy Rosary Sisters in Scotland brought back all that was happiest in my missionary life.

I thank you for having ever been faithful to the promise you made to me long years ago when you were simply 'Agnes' the promise to pray for my final perseverance, won't you be so good as to pray for that very same grace down to the end.

For many years back I have but little association with Killeshandra so it inevitably happens that while I pray for each and all yet I must have a special place in my memory for those whom I happen to know personally. God has arranged that I am not to be in personal contact with the sisters. That this is God's will is certain. Because of that I must be extremely careful - for the sake of the sisters and for God's own sweet sake that I never have anything to do with Killeshandra except what God tells me to do through the lips of the Superiors in Killeshandra. If ever God wants me to meet any sisters he will arrange that I meet them. But I am now convinced beyond doubt that he does not want such a thing.

This knowledge makes me feel very happy although humanly speaking I would like to see the sisters 'humanly' ... this God does not want.

I offer up for you my dear Sister M Michael and my dear daughter in Christ as my little personal sacrifice - the sense of loneliness I feel - as fathers and mothers have to feel when separated from their children - at not being permitted by God to have contact with his consecrated spouses. And I thank God for having thus arranged things for I might easily offend God by taking for myself even the smallest of the affections of those whose whole heart and soul and body with all their activities are consecrated to God for time and eternity. There is in my heart a fear of ever incurring God's displeasure where the affections of His consecrated spouses are concerned.

God wanted me to bring the sisters to Him in Killeshandra. Once that was done God insists on my leaving Killeshandra to the Sisters and to his own Sacred Heart. He will have nobody there except those whom he appoints: your Bishop, your Spiritual Director, your chaplain, etc., etc. I willingly, lovingly, wholeheartedly accept the expression of God's Holy Will in this matter. And oh how I thank him on bended knees for not having permitted that I should have ever been the cause of the loss of any sister's vocation. It would break my heart if I thought I had been the cause of such a calamity.

This is all about myself! But I am sure you will understand why. Provided you are finally professed, a good religious, a good faithful missionary sister, your life spent in the service of Jesus Christ, your Divine Master and Spouse and in the service of his children in Africa, you will become a great saint and save your soul and be in heaven for all eternity. Is it not the only thing to be desired and prayed for those we love? For the remainder of my life I will pray

for you that all this may be accomplished in you. We will wait until we meet in heaven, to meet in the home God has prepared for us, for our next meeting and that will be for all eternity.

Oh what a grace to pray for all those we love. How it is worth our while to sacrifice everything that would stand in our way between us and heaven.

The bell for dinner - and also the going out of the mail, is ringing. So this strange letter ends. I will write again before you leave Scotland. God bless you my very dear daughter in Xst.⁶⁴

Though Shanahan felt an ever greater sense of weariness he was in fact seen to be accomplishing a lot for one in retirement. Much of his apostolate was done from his desk as he himself remarked on one occasion. The steady flow of inspired letters was deeply appreciated by the recipients and the letters were treasured as living relics. It might appear to Shanahan and to others that he had now settled indefinitely into a routine of such activities in the interests of the Irish Province and as an outsider wrote later:

Although Bishop Shanahan felt himself to be in 'exile' in Clareville he was appreciative of all that was done for his comfort: it was simply not the life for him. His influence in Blackrock, of which Clareville was a part, had been greater and more long-range than he imagined. He had only to walk across the quadrangle to affect students and young priests, and evoke such remarks as: "That man stands for something...it is difficult to take your eyes off him...he has a magnetic quality - a special grace - he is, and looks like, a great missionary..."

Africa once more

Then out of the blue, as it were, all was to change - a change not sought by himself this time but seen by him as the work of God.

Many old friends who were very sorry to lose his company were delighted for his sake that he was going back to Africa once more. Among these was the Provincial Fr Dan Murphy whom he consulted immediately on having received Bishop Heffernan's invitation. Dr Murphy more than most appreciated the value of Bishop Shanahan to the Province and to the Promotions team in particular but he did not hesitate to give this new initiative his blessing. In a letter to the Superior General, however, he said that most people did not believe that he could remain long in Kenya. Having secured Dr Murphy's permission Shanahan wrote immediately to the Superior General informing of the situation and seeking his permission and blessing. His letter reads as follows:

5 July 1938: His Lordship Mgr Heffernan Vicar Apostolic of Zanzibar has just offered me the opportunity of doing apostolic work in his Vicariate. I have accepted provisionally with all my heart while awaiting from you the required permission to leave Ireland and once more take up the life of a missionary in Africa. Since this invitation so unexpected but so desired by me throughout the six years of my novitiate in Clareville comes from a Vicar Apostolic I see it as a call from God. I hasten to follow this call provided always that you, Monseigneur, agree seeing in it the will of God. To go to work till the end of my days would be the greatest gift possible to this old missionary who is writing to you begging you to accede to his request.

Mgr Heffernan has told me he that he will write to you on his own behalf.

The Rev. Fr Provincial of Ireland sees it as providential sign from God. My departure from here for the missions will do good to the cause for the

missions. If missionaries return to Europe it is only in order to retrace their footsteps to Africa and work again with renewed zeal. That is what we preach here. And now I wish to back up theory by putting it into practice...⁶⁵

Mgr Le Hunsec pencilled a note for his secretary. "To be seen to later but I admire." In other words he had to take time to consult his council but his instinctive reaction was one of admiration. He may have waited for a letter from Bishop Heffernan himself. In the event none arrived.

Bishop Shanahan reserved his most full statement of the facts of his new appointment and its significance for Sr Michael who was about to start her missionary career in Nigeria inspired all along by him. He knew she would miss him very much so he writes a very personal letter once he had first dealt with the official superiors:

7 July 1938 My very dear Daughter in Christ

I am glad you reminded me of the holy pictures. You will find them signed and enclosed herewith. May they be instrumental in inspiring with ever greater love and fervour for Christ and His blessed Mother those who meditate while looking at them on the love of Christ for each of us. The Apostolic blessings are attached to those pictures so that those who use them to meditate while praying for the intentions of our Holy Father the Pope and for the conversion of the pagan world - one of his chief intentions - will gain extraordinary indulgences.

And the Exams? They will have been, please God, a great success. I hope you have done very well in each of the difficult subjects you had worked so hard to master perfectly. You know how I have been praying for you and for all your fellow students, especially Miss O'Neill your great friend whom I was glad to meet and to know (won't you be good enough to remember me to her). I will have the opportunity of meeting you again in Killeshandra when we will have our final talk together. Let me explain.

Since I wrote to you last God has granted to me a most exceptional favour. And here it is. I have been invited by Right Rev Dr Heffernan Bishop of Zanzibar to return with him - as a missionary this time, not as a visitor or sightseer, to his Vicariate in East Africa. His Lordship told me that his request was backed up by every Father in his Vicariate; that no missionary would be more welcome even though I am an old man with many infirmities! Oh I could never convey to you a hundredth part of the joy that filled my heart when I heard this invitation to return to Africa - no matter what part of Africa - it is Africa that matters.

That invitation was for me the direct answer to all those prayers that have been offered up for me by all of you my most beloved daughters in Christ. I was wrong just now in saying you could not understand my happiness. Every missionary heart can and will understand especially the hearts of my very own missionary sisters in Ireland, England, Scotland and Nigeria.

How I prayed that God would hear your prayers and mine - to send me back to Africa, there to spend the remnants of my life in a final effort to give all to God no matter how that 'all' of mine undoubtedly is - yet it is the little all that God has made it possible for me to have, for ever that little all belongs to Him. I owe all to Him. And it makes me love Him all the more. There are few who know better than I do the nothingness of our poor human nature unless God in His mercy takes it to His own Divine Heart to instil into it his own divine life and love, his own self, something of his heaven. We are to sail sometime in the Autumn of this year so that my next Christmas will be spent in Africa.

And Nigeria! And Killeshandra! And you my dear daughter in Christ - you with each one of the whole number that go to make up the Congregation of Our Lady Queen of the Holy Rosary, what shall be our future relation? No change whatsoever except that our relation shall be more highly spiritualised. God has prepared us for this. He has cut me off from Nigeria. And in doing this he has bestowed on me ineffable graces. Then he has sent me here to this solitude - to this exile - to do a long and trying second novitiate of six years duration. During that time he detached me from Killeshandra by insisting on my being there but seldom. All for the sanctification of the members of the congregation under its legitimate Religious and Ecclesiastical Superiors. Our life must be lived in and with and through the medium of Christ in his Mystical Body. He wants each of us for his own divine self. He allowed us to be near each other for a certain number of years - just as he allowed us to be near our parents for a time - then the day came when he called each of us saying to us as he said to the Apostles, from the beginning down to today "Stand up, leave all, home, parents, friends... all and follow ME".

So he tells me today "Leave Killeshandra, leave each and all you know and love so much, leave Nigeria, leave Ireland - leave all, all - and follow me... this time to Zanzibar" - leaving me to understand that the next call will be from Zanzibar to our grand home beyond the stars, the home he has prepared for us. And so it shall be with you, Agnes. Already he has called you to where you now are. In a few days time he will call you to be his own consecrated spouse for time and eternity. Ah this honour of being called by Christ to be united to him, to belong to him and he to belong to you - to be one with him in all the faculties of your divinised soul, to belong to him absolutely in your whole being - set apart consecrated to God - forever! This means total separation of your heart and mind from all that's created. If you do love you love in and with and through Christ. You love what he loves, as he loves. Your will and your very affections are so united to his that you are one with him. When he has thus made of you his very own he will call on you to follow him... to Nigeria, to Africa to your great missionary work for the poor blacks his children, and yours henceforth on that very account.

I fear I am tiring you repeating what you know already so well. And yet - I too know all about it - but when the practical application comes, when the actual separation from all we love takes place, while there is ineffable joy there is also a blending of poor human sorrow and weakness and maybe tears with that heavenly joy - for in spite of all we still belong to the earth where God gradually prepares us for heaven.

Every parting done at God's bidding has an extraordinary effect, a twofold effect: a complete renewal, a cleansing, a strengthening of one's spiritual life and a bringing of heaven closer to us while the earth and all that belongs to it seem to go far far away to the frontiers of space. There's a complete change in one's soul, in ones whole being. God and heaven with the salvation of souls - this and this alone matters henceforth. And as at death - one feels oneself all alone with God. As you stand on the ship at Dunlaoghaire or Liverpool you seem to leave space and time to move on towards eternity - it is a great preparation for the final journey to heaven - one carries away but one's few merits not our few earthly belongings to the frontiers of eternity. The Missioner feels, knows, that he has God alone as his support, his comfort, his life, his love, his all - oh that is it. God is the missioner's 'All' - and that is

what makes the missionary ineffably happy.

God has said to the missioner "Come and follow Me". The missioner has obeyed God's summons, God's loving call. And now on board the ship with strangers he feels all alone until God's familiar voice whispers in the very depth of his heart and soul "Fear not - I am with you".

Such is the stream of thought that pours through my heart and mind as I - now an old man - an old missionary write to you a young missionary sister on the eve of your final espousals to Christ, on the eve of your first missionary voyage. Though old in body I feel as I felt forty years ago when I too a young missionary of thirty summers set sail on my first voyage to Africa and all that has followed since God ever keeping his promise. "Come with me – don't fear - I am with you." This he says to every missionary. This you will hear very soon in your own heart.

And now I leave you with Christ Jesus your Spouse. How happy I am to think that I have not come between your soul and Christ. Glad to think that I may have in some small way helped you over some dark and lonely passages to bring you and keep you nearer to Christ.

I will ever remember you in all my spiritual conversation with God - that he may grant you this greatest of all graces - final perseverance to the end as Christ's consecrated Religious and Missionary spouse. Don't fear. He is ever with you.

I bless you, my very very dear Daughter in Christ.

Ever your affectionate Father in Xst

+ Jos. Shanahan CSSp⁶⁶

Among his old friends who wrote to congratulate him and invite him for a last visit was Mrs Ryan of Abbeyleix, whose daughter, Sister Brigid, had been one of the first women to volunteer for service in Nigeria. In his replay Dr Shanahan wrote 31 August 1938:

Yes I am to be once again among my own people in my adopted home - Africa. God is indeed very good to me in sending me back to Africa even though it is not to Nigeria.. Tomorrow I am crossing over to England for my last retreat. When I return I will let you know what day I'd be able to get down to Abbeyleix to spend a day or so with you for the sake of old times. Needless to say I will be honoured if Joe is good enough to come up to Dublin and motor me down to Leix.

Kindly remember me to Joe and to Pat and May.

As he writes to Mother General (Sr Augustine) to wish her a happy feast day and give some further details about his plans, we see again that the perspective of Africa is now constantly in his mind:

I wish you a very happy feast on the occasion of the festival of your great African Patron and Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine. Under his special guidance and intercession may you do for that part of Africa entrusted by God to the Congregation over which you are placed by Him as mother, ruler and inspirer, what St. Augustine did for North Africa and the whole Catholic Church.

I will offer up the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for you on Sunday. Our Retreat - a grand Retreat it was too, concludes tomorrow.

Archbishop Goodier is a great missionary, and therefore also a great man of God.

On Wednesday I have to cross to England to give my last Retreat in Europe! I have given but few. Strange my first effort was tried on the poor French Sisters near Dungarvan – and my last and second to Sisters—given to the Sisters of St. Joseph. It is strange that God should call me to give them a Retreat—but I partly know why holy Providence has so arranged things. I am well and very happy. I believe that God has let me off the remainder of that penance He meant me to do here in Ireland. It must be that the Holy Rosary Sisters put in a good word for me. How happy I am to be off again to Africa—even though it is East and not West.⁶⁷

When Shanahan says that he partly knew why God had arranged that his last retreat should be given to the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny, his mind may well have gone back to the service they had given in Nigeria and that it was their inability to continue there that had influenced him, perhaps with some impatience at their slow progress, to set about founding a new society of missionary Sisters.

No sooner had he returned to Clareville than the invitations came in fast succession for him to put in his last appearance in several places. Writing on 6 September he rejoiced at the remarkable amount of missionary back-up work being done throughout Ireland.

Tomorrow Sunday, I'm to be at Navan, where I have to respond to the Toast of the Missions. Here are to be some twelve Bishops present with crowds of our Irish missionary friends – clergy and faithful people. It is for an old missionary a sight to gladden the last days of his life.

How wonderful to see this outpouring of the Spirit of Christ over and into the hearts of Catholic Ireland that they may co-operate with His Holy Spirit – the Living Love of our souls – in being His instruments enabling Him to pour out over Africa and the whole pagan world the over-flowing life of Divine Grace from Ireland's heart into the poor starved pagan heart of the world.

God will bless Ireland now as always with blessings untold not alone sufficient to maintain and fortify our holy Faith at home but to spread it afar; to help Christ to build up his Kingdom on earth which His enemies would fain destroy. But they shall not prevail.

Before concluding I would like to mention that during my stay in Ireland I have done my best to help on the Missionary Cause of our own Province. It was the only way at my disposal of helping – very indirectly – but I believe very really – not alone the cause of Africa in our own Congregation but also the cause of Africa in the Congregation of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary.

The Rev. Father Provincial has been very generous to me, were it not for his assistance well.....we'll leave it at that. He did assist me. Once again he was the instrument of Divine Providence who always sees that His own have much more than they need....⁶⁸

While in England giving the retreat to the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny he called to Castlehead and gave a brief retreat to the students there. He was also invited to perform the ordination ceremony in Lancaster cathedral where two Spiritans were among those he ordained.

On 8 September he wrote again to Mother General in answer to her invitation to come to Killeshandra:

I am just back from England to find your letter and kind invitation to Killeshandra awaiting me. Tomorrow, Wednesday, I hope to arrive in Killeshandra about 3 p.m. Father (Fred) Fullen is motoring me along. But . . . we will have to get away on Thursday morning to keep an appointment in

Omagh, thence back to Dublin to keep your own appointment on Saturday - to meet Most Rev. Dr. Lyons at 3 p.m.

Just now I cannot - to my great regret - remain longer with you. I belong already to Africa and my new home there.⁶⁹

On Sept 18, i.e. Sunday next, I have to be at Navan for the laying of the foundation stone of the new college - Dr. Blowick's special invitation.

On Sept. 20th I have got to attend the centenary celebrations of the Propagation of the Faith at the Pro-Cathedral - Father Clarke's special invitation.

When that's done I have to cross over to England with Dr. Heffernan, or alone for ordinations at Castlehead!

But whenever I do get a few days free, when my stuff for Zanzibar is packed and ready, I'll spend a few days in Killeshandra.

I cannot forget that God has given me six years here in the neighbourhood of The House on the Hill.

The Retreat went off all right. St. Joseph insisted on my giving that little Retreat. I think I have paid off all my debts now - this last was worrying me a bit - for I owe much to St. Joseph. Now all is set aright. Many thanks for that lovely little St. Joseph card - all the rest of the news for tomorrow.

Apropos Dr Shanahan's visit to Omagh mentioned above, this visit to the Convent of Mercy Sisters School was made at the request of his driver Fr Fred Fullen, whose nieces were in attendance there. The whole school was assembled in the open to hear Bishop Shanahan speak about his work in Africa, and when one of the Fullen girls heard him say that he was returning now to Africa to die there she was very worried and prayed that he would stay at home where he would be much more safe!

Illustrative of the supportive climate for the foreign missions at the time was a Sale of Work with a difference attended by Shanahan, namely an exhibition of paintings with the proceeds going to the missionary funds of the Holy Rosary Sisters. He was called on to deputise for Bishop Lyons in making the opening speech. In his informative report to the Mother General on 16 September he adds his own personal touch as usual on such occasions:

Mr Frank Fahy, Speaker of An Dáil, was present. He made a splendid speech. Then came the Editor of the Anglo-Celt, Cavan. And his speech on Killeshandra was the gem of the proceedings. His Excellency, Most Rev. Dr. Neville spoke - by request - just a few well chosen words as he always does. There was a lively interest taken in the proceedings by all those present. The audience included the family of Mr. Clifford: father, mother, brothers and one sister.

There was regret that the pictures had not or could not be taken to Killeshandra that the Sisters might see them. I had tea with Mrs. Clifford, Miss Clifford, Father Grant, and another great friend Mr Alcock (?) of Killeshandra.

Mr Cogan the Secretary of the Irish Arts Society left nothing undone to make a success of the Exhibition.

Mr Kevin Kenny was a most efficient chairman. Mrs Heade was there too and most earnest to help in every way.

As a souvenir of the occasion I secured a little oil painting for you in Killeshandra - "COPPERMINES, AVOCA". It, somehow, reminds me of Killeshandra. At the same time I was told to select a picture for myself - at your request. I chose "FROM CLARE ISLAND", a sea-scape to remind you of those grand sea voyages out to Africa. I would ask you to accept this as a

little souvenir of Mr. Clifford now in the Trappist monastery, Roscrea.

A poor old woman came in with all she had - some 10/- or 15/- to buy a picture in order to help the poor Missionary Sisters. And she set her poor heart on one lovely little picture - which was priced twice the amount she had - no matter what price it was she'd have it, and pay for it too - so the Committee arranged to let her have it for the 10/- or 15/-. Wasn't she happy to have it as her very own - dear token of the grand Missionary Sisters and of the Grand Painter now become a Cistercian monk - old woman, Painter, Sisters: all missionaries!

Even when the funds did not roll in at a particular function Dr Shanahan still had words of encouragement and offered a new perspective to those involved. Writing to the Sisters on one such occasion he said:

"The Sale of Work in Dublin was not a huge financial success but the good work was done all the same. Your missionary helpers are generous hearted and full of apostolic zeal. It's that that pleases God and will obtain funds if not from the actual Sale of Work at least from some other quarter.⁷⁰

With all his appointments and with the complications of a nasty cold, one is not surprised to hear that he had neglected to get down to packing his bags for the great voyage ahead.

In reply to Mother General's invitation he wrote 5 October:

...I would have gone up yesterday but a cold kept me here. The weeping, whooping, wheezing stage is over with all the "good humour" that ever accompanies it. I'll be all right tomorrow.

And you will I know believe me - when I tell you I haven't done a single thing yet for the voyage to Kenya! 20 things keep coming along at a time - all wanting to be done...I've put my two feet down now. When I get back from Killeshandra I'll start to get ready.

Dr Shanahan had been invited to Killeshandra for the official celebration of the approval by Rome of the constitutions of the society. He was too ill to travel. Sr Philomena Fox has a significant passage in her memoir about that event:

In the decree of approval, Bishop Shanahan's part in founding the congregation was acknowledged, but this statement left the technical issue unresolved. It was not until the first general chapter of the congregation in 1942 that Bishop Shanahan was officially proclaimed founder of the Holy Rosary congregation.

After the first decree of approval was received, the event was celebrated in Killeshandra by a modest but very well planned banquet for all who had helped to bring the congregation to its present status. Although Bishop Shanahan had accepted his invitation he did not feel able to come the day arranged.

The Bishop of Kilmore, Bishop Lyons, was presented with an illuminated copy of the decree. There were several fine speakers and the celebration was a very successful event. Dr Leen, on his way back from Killeshandra, stopped to see Bishop Shanahan in Clareville to give him an account of the whole affair. This visit with the recounting of the celebration and all that it implied, brought great joy to Bishop Shanahan. It also healed the rift that had occurred between them when Father Leen misunderstood Bishop Shanahan's fatherly love and concern for the Sisters. "If only I had known!", Father Leen was to say later when he read many of his letters to the sisters.

On the feast of the Holy Rosary in October, Bishop Shanahan was

invited to come to Killeshandra and present the sisters with copies of their constitutions. This was a great joy to the sisters and most of them got him to autograph their copy after the little ceremony.

There was a sadness about Bishop Shanahan on this occasion, perhaps a loneliness. He seemed more withdrawn than usual, though his manner was gracious and pleasant with a touch of majesty - an occasional twinkle of amusement flitting across his eyes.

He had decided to accept an offer to go to Nairobi and knew he would shortly say goodbye to Killeshandra, probably forever.

On 28 October Dr Shanahan travelled to Rockwell for the funeral of Bishop Bartholomew Wilson, who had served in East Africa and later in Sierra Leone. Shanahan, then a Prefect, had first made his acquaintance when he arrived in Rockwell as a student in 1898. As the car taking Bishop Shanahan to the funeral mass had a slight accident the party arrived somewhat late and as the Bishop entered the sanctuary some junior boys who had never heard of Shanahan were so impressed by his appearance and the dignity of his bearing that they were convinced that even St Patrick had turned up to honour the dead missionary bishop!

30 October, the Feast of Christ the King, marked the official blessing of the new Senior Scholasticate in Kimmage. It was a gala occasion attended by dignitaries of church and state and presided over by the Papal Nuncio. The ceremony was performed by the Superior General, Mgr Le Hunsec, and Bishop Shanahan, who two years earlier had to decline to decline the invitation of blessing the foundation stone, was the centre of attention on this occasion because of his approaching departure. When he returned some time afterwards to bid good bye to the Senior Scholastics one of them asked: "How do you feel about going back to Africa?" "Oh" he said, "I'm absolutely delighted." "But" someone said, "At your age it must seem rather strange to start back into the tropics again." "Well" he said, "I am like an old horse coming up to a fence, and if you encourage it he'd get over it. That is the way with me now. I'm going to take this last jump into the country for which I have the greatest regard - for its people and everything about it, and I will be able to do something for them, my last missionary effort, even though I am old."

Once November had begun Shanahan was as it were under starter's orders. As to what he was to pack in his bags he wrote on 3 November to Mother Augustine to cancel one item and suggest a substitute:

There is just one matter I want to mention. You were good enough to ask me what I would accept as a little souvenir of Killeshandra - and rather foolishly ! I mentioned a Green Tunicle and Dalmatic for Episcopal ceremonies. During my years in Nigeria I never used them! And that's why they are in shreds. Please don't get them - Dr Heffernan tells me he has not got any because they are not needed. I had to use them here in Ireland, but that's altogether different from Africa.

Now you would give me great pleasure in giving me just one group photograph of the Sisters in Killeshandra - and one of the Sisters in Nigeria. Anyone you have to hand - just as a remembrance of you and of the past both in Nigeria and Killeshandra..."

And to ensure that the Holy Rosary Sisters would not be forgotten by the people who mattered at home he let Mother General know of other plans:

I have taken it on myself to ask the Right Rev. Msgr Le Hunsec, our Superior General, to call to see you and the Sisters in Killeshandra, accompanied by the Rev. Father Provincial, Dr Murphy. His Lordship will call on Sunday next. I

hope to be with the party. Just now I can only surmise that he will arrive between 12 and one o'clock...

The following day he confirms this appointment lest there be any confusion:

On Sunday morning at 10.30 a car leaves Blackrock (with me in it!) to "pick up" Rt Rev. Mgr Le Hunsec, Dr D. Murphy (Provincial) and Rev John Byrne (of Rockwell), on our way to Killeshandra. We hope to be there between 12 and 1 p.m. (5 in all).

A week later he writes to tell Mother General that he had a letter from France announcing that at last his passage to East Africa had been booked aboard the "Explorateur Grandidior" sailing from Marseilles on 1 December. The same day he had received disturbing news that his sister May was seriously ill and in danger of being "called to our heavenly father at any moment." He knew that his impending departure would not help but added, "But God will be all the more lovingly merciful no matter what happens."

Most likely he then set out for Maynooth to be with his ailing sister. He was happy to see her make a welcome recovery. What he did not know was that his near neighbour in Clareville, Fr Larry Healy, had taken a sudden turn and had died unexpectedly. That was a death that must have affected Dr Shanahan as it was Fr Healy who had been Provincial Superior residing in Clareville in 1902 when he set out for Africa for the first time. In his years of retirement in Clareville he must have often set out for community exercises in the company of Fr Healy who winter and summer was faithful to that routine. So Clareville was to experience a big change in personnel as within a matter of weeks Dr Crehan was also to be called by the Lord.

Shanahan's last visit to Killeshandra must have been a very emotional experience for him, and indeed for all there. He gave them an inspirational farewell address which summed up so much of his own spiritual outlook and referred in passing to the events linking him with Killeshandra over the years. Sr Philomena has left us with a record of that event and a transcription of his farewell words:

Before leaving for Nairobi Bishop Shanahan came to Killeshandra to say goodbye. He was the same great bishop whose resonant voice had stirred our hearts in those early days. He stood firmly, in the greatness of his humility and complete... "Those years for me when I left Africa were hard ones. My life has been a hard one - I have always found it so - but especially during that time - my memory, even will-power all seemed to vanish. It was God's way of purifying my soul. For everything I give great thanks to God. Everything that has happened to me my faults, my failings, my shortcomings, trials, disappointments, hard sayings (and we all meet with such), God has used for the sanctification of my soul.

But now, God has given all back to me, and is bringing me back once more to beloved Africa. I feel now nearer to Africa and nearer to Killeshandra - yet even through those years of trial I have felt intense love of God. Everything that happens to us comes straight from the hands of God our Father - every little detail is meant to mould our souls and draw them nearer to himself. Then let us throw all - our sins - our faults and all else besides into the boundless ocean of God's mercy and love and let us say: My God, I give thee all - Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Our life is a psalm. At the end of every psalm and often in the liturgy we say Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost ... we shall do it for all eternity.

My dear Sisters, accept all - your weaknesses, imperfections, trials and

difficulties and offer all to God. Above all - do not be proud. Love God, praise God, trust God. Be true to the Mass and to Our Lady's Rosary. Accept everything that He deigns to send. There is a divine artist in each soul forming and purifying it until finally it becomes assimilated with Christ himself. Now I have learned to look on things with the mind of Christ. Love and cherish your failings - they are precious gifts from God to humble you. Never worry over trifling things but meet every-thing with a "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost". At the end of each psalm we repeat Glory be to the Father. Our life being a psalm and the sign of the cross being the last thing we can do, we should repeat with still greater fervour: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost ...

ALWAYS FORGIVE. Be faithful to your Congregation. Be faithful to each other. In all circumstances be loyal, faithful, charitable, forgiving. In life there will always be misunderstandings. We are all human. We hurt each other by mere nothings. But no matter what happens - always forgive - always forgive. That is the Christlike thing. Betrayal of friendship is hard to bear; or coldness or indifference, or infidelity from those we have loved and trusted. But we must always forgive as Christ forgives. Be known by your unity and charity as the early Christians were known: "See how they love one another".

My God, I give thee all - Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit .. By the prayers and acceptance of whatever crosses life in its last lap has in store for me I can continue to be a missionary. May I fulfil God's will to the end.⁷¹

Earlier, as we have seen, Bishop Shanahan had taken a major decision after much thought to destroy all his papers including the private letters he had received over the years. His decision to destroy them was his own, remarking that now he could face the future as a free man. As many of these letters were of a very personal nature he would have felt that they should never be accessible to anyone but himself.⁷²

His departure from Blackrock was more low key. For Thursday 24 November the community journal has this brief entry: "Dr Shanahan leaves for the East Coast of Africa. Coffee in No.5 after dinner prior to Dr Shanahan's departure." No.5 parlour was the room where Shanahan had attended his first annual retreat as priest as he prepared to make his final commitment in the Congregation. Some years later that room was to be decorated by Br Fulbert Heim with wall paintings depicting East African scenes. Dr Shanahan was soon to see the actual scenes depicted by Br Fulbert. The editor of the Blackrock College Annual inserted this note for the year:

From our midst Mgr Shanahan has set sail for Kenya Colony, B.E. Africa, his beloved Africa for whom the treacherous climate has no fears when the salvation of souls voices a call. For the six years he has dwelt among us, we have learnt to appreciate his great and magnanimous heart and to share in his insatiable missionary thirst for souls which led him to seek to end his days among the children of Africa. Our loss is Africa's gain and we know His Lordship's mind to well to wish it otherwise...

As he left from the North Wall there was a group of Holy Ghost Fathers together with Shanahan's relatives to bid him Goodbye. A press photographer has happily left us with a record of the occasion.

During the stop off in London he called to the hospital where his niece was a trainee nurse. She was the last member of his family to be favoured with a visit from him.

While staying for some days in the Motherhouse in Paris before setting out on the long train journey for Marseilles, the port of embarkation, he wrote a brief personal

note to his niece Josie:

12 Nov 1938

I was pleased to meet you once again at the North Wall with Michael and Joe last Thursday evening. It is hard to bid farewell to those we love. But, oh! the wretched thing life would be if we had nobody to love - nobody to return our love, nobody to share with us our joys and sorrows, our work, our very life. Now God has given us all those good things along with love and along with himself, to love and to be loved. And so it is that farewell means an intensification of our love for one another, and a real sorrow that we have to part and go far away from those we love. And here God in heaven comes to our rescue; with God's grace we shall all meet again never to be separated and that for ever in heaven, enjoying God and his heaven which he has prepared for us to share with him - our Father in heaven.

Josie, I am so glad that I have had those few talks with you. Now I know and love you all the more - you are so good to poor Aunt Mary and to all your relatives and friends. God bless you and keep you near his own heart. I will write to you again, but above all I shall pray for you Josie - heaven and eternity and God is the only thing to bother about on earth.

¹ Shanahan to Harnett 1931 IParCh

² Shanahan to Harnett 1 May 1932 IParCh

³ RSCG/H26/324 14/06/32

⁴ 19th June 1932; for a brief biography of Bishop Heffernan cf. *Irish Spiritans Remembered* No 174

⁵ *Blackrock College Annual* 1933 pp5ff

⁶ *Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family*, Ed. Sr Mary Brigid HRS Vol. 1 101f

⁷ *Ibid* p.104f

⁸ For Dr Dan Murphy cf *JSR* No. 204

⁹ From the journal of the Good Saviour Convent, courtesy of Sr Miranda Richards

¹⁰ *Blackrock College Annual* 1935 pp9ff

¹¹ *Ibid* pp 29ff

¹² Jordan pp208ff

¹³ *Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 2 p. 212

¹⁴ Fr Jerry Ellis' recollections of Shanahan

¹⁵ Fr Jerry Foley's recollections of Shanahan

¹⁶ *Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 2 p.42

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.149, 206,162

¹⁸ Shanahan to Le Hunsec 14 July 1935 GenArch

¹⁹ BG Vol 37 541 1935

²⁰ *Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family* 1 p.130

²¹ Shanahan to Le Hunsec 30 October 1935

²² *Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 1 p.107

²³ Shanahan to Le Hunsec 30 October 1935

²⁴ Shanahan to Murphy 25 November 1935 IParCh

²⁵ *Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 2 pp220ff

²⁶ Shanahan to Murphy 25 November 1935 IParCh

27 MA 1936 p.32f

28 A Selection from Memories and Letters of our Revered Founder, Most Reverend Joseph Shanahan CSSp Sr Rosarii account p.15ff

29 'Lord that I may see' by Sr Philomena Fox

30 Additional letters of Bishop Joseph Shanahan pp19ff..

31 *Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 1 pp116ff

32 *Ibid* pp118ff

33 *Ibid* Vol 2 p.144

34 *Ibid* Vol 1 pp123ff

35 *Ibid* Vol 2 p.235

36 From the community journal at Fribourg courtesy Fr Joseph Carrard, archivist

37 *Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 2 pp138ff

38 *Ibid* p.140f

39 *Ibid* Vol. 1 p.127f

40 *Ibid* Vol 2 p.151

41 *Ibid* P.152

42 Shanahan to Murphy 26 October 1936 IParCh

43 Shanahan to Murphy 25 November 1935 IParCh

44 *Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 2 p.144

45 MA 1935 p.203

46 MA 1936 pp154ff

47 *Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 2 p.239f

48 *Ibid* p.149

49 *Ibid* p.154f

50 Additional letters of Bishop Joseph Shanahan (MS). P.5

51 'Additional letters' 14 May 1937 p.38f

52 Shanahan to Murphy 18 May 1937, IParCh

53 'Additional letters' pp43ff

54 *Bishop Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 2 17 January 1937 p146f

55 'Lord that I may see' p..46f

56 *Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol.1 pp129ff

57 *Ibid* Vol 2 p.241

58 Shanahan to Murphy 13 January 1938 IParCh

59 *Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 2 p.160f

60 *Bulletin Général* 1938 p.459f

61 'Additional letters' p.51f

62 *Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 2 p.165

63 'Additional letters' p53f

64 *Ibid* pp54f

65 Shanahan to Le Hunsec 5 July 1938 GenArch

66 'Additional letters' pp56ff

67 *Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 2 p.168

68 *Shanahan and his Missionary Family* Vol 2 p.170f

69 *Ibid* p.168f

70 *Ibid* p.169f

71 'Lord that I may see' by Sr Philomena Fox pp49ff

72 *Ibid.* p.37



Bishop Shanahan bids farewell to the Holy Rosary Sisters 1938

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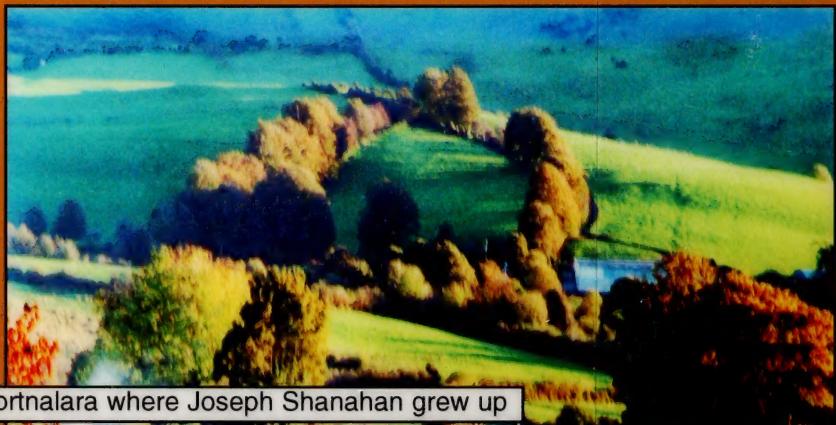




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*“One is brought by the beauty of
God’s Works into ever closer contact
with Him Who designed them and
keeps them in existence.....”*

(Shanahan Letters)



Gortnalara where Joseph Shanahan grew up